The Works of

ARETINO

VOLUME I

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THE WORKS OF

ARETINO

VOLUME I

Portrait of Aretino, by Titian

The Works of
ARETINO

Translated into English from the original Italian, with a critical and biographical essay

by

SAMUEL PUTNAM

Illustrations by Marquis de Bayros

VOLUME I

CHICAGO

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PIETRO ARETINO

Poison-Flower *of the* Renaissance

A Critical and Biographical Study

By

Samuel Putnam

"*Machiavel and Aretino knew fashions and were acquainted with ye cunning of ye world.*"

Gabriel Harvey: *Marginalia.*

PIETRO ARETINO

Poison-Flower of the Renaissance

I.

"*On the day set by Julius II., that is to say, on Monday, Michelangelo betook himself once more to the Palace. He had been given to understand that the Pope was leaving on a hunting expedition in the Albanian mountains. The court was filled with the joyous sound of horns, the barking of dogs, the cries of hunters and the beating of the wings of falcons. From a distance, Michelangelo saw the Pope, clad in hunting costume, strange enough for a man of the church. Shod in high boots, wearing a plumed hat and a leather round-jacket, he looked like an old conqueror as he mounted a superb horse. Accorsio*[1] *held his stirrup. The Pope appeared to be animated and whispered in the ear of his favorite, who smiled like a woman, a fine, ambiguous smile.*

"*Buonarotti understood that, at this moment, Julius II. was little concerned with his mausoleum. He came back on Tuesday. The Pope had not yet returned from the hunt. He put in an appearance on Wednesday and met, in the gallery, a secretary whom he knew, who informed him that His Holiness, having received vexatious news from Bologna, was in a bad humor and had just given the priest, d'Ancona, a caning. Courtezans, with a discomfited air, were coming out of the audience chamber, and Michelangelo overheard the ambassador from France remark, with a smile, to a fat and insouciant chaplain:*

" '*But he is terribly irritable, your Pope!*' "

With these few vivid lines, Dmitri Merejkowski, in his novelized biography of Michelangelo,[2] puts us into the heart

[1]One of the papal "Ganymedes."

[2]*Michel Ange, Roman, Dmitry Merejkowski, Traduit du russe par Dumesnil de Gramont, Paris, Artheme Fayard & cie, 1926.*

of the *cinquecento*, in all probability the most riotously colorful and the most colorfully depraved epoch in civilized history. Merejkowsky's account is fiction, but if there ever was a time when truth was stranger than fiction, that time was the Sixteenth century.

The Russian writer's snapshot is, of course, not the whole picture, but it is the focus of that larger photograph which might be composed—and which, yet, so eludes any one who attempts the task—from the documents of the age. For the Papacy was the heart of a Romanized world, and the world was a goodly apple rotten at the core.

To fill in the picture, we must add: the melodrama of dagger-thrusts in the dark; the finest of the fine and Machiavellian arts, the art of poisoning; and, finally, that most poisonous of all weapons, the pen. Oscar Wilde's shocking title[1] becomes a commonplace, in a world in which the Popes and princes of the earth—and the pirates of the high seas, as well—pay groveling tribute to the Prince of Blackmailers and even think seriously of giving the fellow a cardinal's hat. The cold-blooded craft, cunning and self-centeredness of the era are reflected for us in the political morality to be encountered in Machiavelli's *Principe* and Guicciardini's *Ricordi politici*;[2] while such highly chromatic names as the Medici, Lucrezia Borgia, Cellini, Malatesta, Gonzaga, etc., round out the picture. Tasso and Ariosto, today the most unread of authors outside their native country, provide the literary background, while Michelangelo, Titian, Raphael and Tintoretto do the honors in paint, to say nothing of such lesser figures as Bellini, Giorgione, Sansovino and others.

The world scene, too, which means the European scene, is a fascinating one. While the Popes of Rome, in scarlet hunting costume, are riding to the chase accompanied by their favorite Ganymedes and the Doges are lording it over the world from their *rocca sicura*, Venice, it is, at the same

[1]Reference is, of course, to *Pen, Pencil and Poison*.
[2]See also his *Storia d'Italia*.

time, the day of the "Spanish flamingo,"[1] the Emperor Charles V., of the wavering, reactionary and stingy Francis I. in France, of Henry VIII., his wives, divorces and religious schisms in England, of Luther in Germany, nailing up his theses on the church door at Wittenberg, and of Barbarossa, sailing the seas for Their Imperial Majesties, the Sultan Selim I. and the King of Algiers. What more could be asked in the way of color?

And out of all this welter of gorgeous semi-barbarism, there emerges—there must emerge—for the student who seeks a conscientious close-up, the figure of one man—the bastard son of a prostitute, legend has it, though more likely the son of a village shoemaker—who, by the sheer force of personality (since what other explanation is there?), rules the rulers of this turbulent world, flaying them into submission with the power of his pen, accepting, with one hand, their regal bribes, and, with the other, tossing the bulk of what he gets to the poor, living all the while in princely splendor, amid a veritable harem of wives and courtezans, and keeping open house to artists, soldiers, statesmen, priests, the intellectual, social and artistic *èlite* of his day. That man is Pietro Aretino, the last fine poison-flower of the century that grew the Borgias.

II.

Yet, Aretino today is barely a name. He is chiefly known in Europe, and in America by a few collectors of *erotica*, as the author of certain obscene *Dialogues* and obscener *Sonnets*. True, some years ago, a couple of addle-pated college boys[2] got hold of him, went completely out of their heads and—well, the criminal case that ensued, attended by world-wide notoriety, familiarized the public for a fleeting moment with at least the name; and Hearst newspapers even dug up one of Titian's bearded portraits of the "Scourge of Princes." All this, doubtless, has been long since forgotten by the

[1] I lift the phrase from Eugenio Camerini, *Prefazione al primo volume delle Lettere dell' Aretino.*

[2] Loeb and Leopold.

man in the street, and Aretino remains a name for a few Romance professors to conjure with, while if he has any other readers outside the *curiosa* hounds, they are a few pale-handed youths with mildly decadent ambitions who go abrousing in campus libraries.

Sic transit.

If Aretino had been a non-literary personality, the oblivion thus thrust upon him might be understandable. The public may have heard of Machiavelli and the Borgias, for the reason that these names, in a manner, have passed into schoolboy language as classy synonyms or flossy references; Cellini, too, may be fairly well known by those more or less directly concerned with the arts, or who have been told that his *Autobiography* is first-rate reading; but how many would be able to state, for example, who Guicciardini was?

But though most of those who collect and read him—the smut-hounds who trail him down, along with the *Venus in Furs* or Pierre Louÿs' *Aphrodite*— have no suspicion of the fact, Aretino was something a good deal more than a mere picturesque figure in a picturesque age. He was, among other things, the first modern realist of importance, the first writer who dared to break away from the old, dead and deadening, hide-bound traditions of the classicists and the academicians and to write in the language of the people, the language of the street and the market place, even that of the brothel. He was, in a way, the Ring Lardner of his day (plus, of course, much more frankness than our twentieth-century Puritan America permits). Or, we might call him the H L. Mencken (with all scruples removed) or, possibly, the Ben Hecht of his time. (His defense of his *Sonetti lussuriosi* reads strangely like Hecht's flauntingly youthful preface to *Fantazius Mallare.*) It would not be wholly improper to term him the Rabelais of the *cinquecento*, though he lacks the gargantuan, cosmic vitality of Francois of blessed memory. As a matter of fact, he is the antecedent of Rabelais, his contemporary in

years, and of Molière, both of whom would seem to owe him no little, as do, also, Shakespeare and Balzac.

Aretino is not only the first modern realist; he is the first modern journalist. The founder and "first great Adventurer of the Press" Edward Hutton,[1] in his scholarly and lonesome English biography, calls him. In his Pasquinades, his *giudizii* and his letters, as Hutton points out, Aretino really conducted what corresponds to a great modern newspaper, in which scheme, his religious writings (the *prose sacre*) are the pompous, inflated editorials. He is, in a sense, in his "yellow" proclivities, the forerunner of Mr. Hearst, Lord Northcliffe and others, while he is also the father of the awful tribe of modern press agents, who, when they wish to put on airs, become "publicists." It is his boast that "throughout the world, Fame is sold by me."[2] He had to have publicity; it was his living; and he certainly knew how to set about to get it.

He is more than this, however. He is also the first modern critic of the arts—of painting, as of literature. Indeed, he seems to have had, as will be shown later, even more feeling for painting than for literature. His genius was essentially a plastic one, and there was a reason for his almost life-long intimacy with Titian. Like Titian, he was a realist of the senses. De Sanctis, in the role of moralizing professor, finds fault with him for not drawing any "moral impression or elevation of soul" from his contemplation of and love for nature. The kick which Aretino got was a purely sensuous, purely aesthetic one; and in this, he is truly a modernist.

III.

Here, then, we have a man who may be called, in point of chronology, the first literary realist, the first journalist, the first publicist, the first art critic. Surely, such a man has his importance. Is a first-hand knowledge of that importance to

[1] *Pietro Aretino, the Scourge of Princes*, Edward Hutton, Constable and company, 1922.

[2] "... *in tutto il mondo per me negozia la Fama.*" In a letter to Bernardo Tasso, quoted by De Sanctis; see the latter's essay, Vol. II.

be confined to a few Romance instructors and their scattered seminars, for which only a handful of bespectacled graduate students ever enroll? Is the public to know Aretino only as the purveyor of smut, as a writer who is on the *Index expurgatorius* of the contemporary Puritan, and who must, therefore, be smuggled past the customs as a contraband?

Why is this? Why is it that Aretino, for four centuries, has been the victim of a world-wide conspiracy of *shush*? Even the prurient virtue of our combined comstockeries is scarcely enough to account for this, since, with the mouldering influence of time, a bad boy of literature usually puts on the more or less sacrosanct garb of a "classic" and, thenceforth, is looked upon as naughty but, for the sake of art, as comparatively innocuous. Rabelais is a case in point. The *Maitre* is now seldom bothered on the metropolitan stalls. He hardly could be sold, it is true, in Dayton, Tenn., but in Chicago, the Committee of Fifteen does not stay up nights tracking him down. And yet, Aretino, as has been stated, is the godfather of Gargantua and Pantagruel. Why, then, all the animus against Pietro?

The answer is, Aretino is a bad example, not on the sexual side, but in his attitude toward life.

He is capable of being, upon occasion, the most tremendous hypocrite, as in his official and semi-official letters and in his "*laudi*," those cringing, knuckling sonnets that he wrote to order. In this, he was conforming, outwardly and for his own shrewd purposes, to the custom of the age; it was a part of his game. In reality, he is a hardened, ingrown and parading cynic, and that is one thing your Babbitt will never forgive.

Hutton calls Aretino "the negation of the Renaissance." He is more than that. He is the living negation of all the copybook maxims. He knows that early to bed and early to rise may make a man healthy, but that it will never make him wealthy or wise. Get all you can while the getting's good is, rather, his motto, as it is that of the American big

business man; only, the latter will never, never stand for a formulation of his practice. Aretino, like the captain of industry, started at the bottom and worked his way up. But how? And to what? He should have ended on the gallows, but as it was, he came near being made a prince of the church. In other words, he beat the game, and that is, of all things, unforgivable; it is worse than breaking the bank at Monte Carlo.

Aretino has no illusions about himself or, above all, about humanity. He knows human lusts and meanesses and depravations, and speculates in them; they are his stock in trade. He is a non-conformist. He lives his own life, amid his harem of beautiful women and his art treasures, and remarks, with a sneer, "Who's going to keep me from it?" He prefers a talk with Titian or an interview with a lady of fortune to going to mass. When, on his death bed, he is given the holy oils, be bursts forth, to the horror of the pious ones about him, with "Now that I'm all greased up, don't let the rats get me." And he is the man who, according to tradition,[1] had for epitaph:

Here lies Aretino, the Tuscan poet,
Who slandered every one but God, and said:
Sorry, but if I ever met him, I did not know it.

No, Aretino is not, precisely, a Sunday school lad. He was no worse, probably, than Machiavelli, Guicciardini or a hundred others of his day; but Machiavelli and Guicciardini, putting on the cloak of political necessity, have acquired a certain respectability in their *diablerie*. What is wrong for an individual may be, it seems, right for a nation. Aretino merely applies the *Principe* and the *Ricordi politici* to private life; but that is always dangerous. It is doubly dangerous in a democracy. Every republic is replete with Aretinos, but

[1]Probably no more than a tradition. The original runs:

Qui giace l'Aretin poeta tosco,
Che disse mal d'ognun, fuor che di Dio,
Scusandosi col dir, no lo conosco.

they stay under cover and disguise their depradations under moralistic croakings. To speak out, to be frank with one's self and others, is the unpardonable sin. It is to be doubted if, after all, Aretino ever could have existed elsewhere than in such an oligarchy as that which flourished in Venice under the Medici.

This is the real reason for the conspiracy of silence against him. This is the reason the world has chosen to overlook his undeniable contributions to literature, art and the spirit of modernity. It is time, in the name of scholarship, that the veil were lifted. Let us take the man as he was and, giving him his dues, good and bad, endeavor to place him as accurately as possible. In the course of the process, there are a few of us, it is to be hoped, confirmed amoralists, who love color and take it where we find it, who will be content to rejoice in the vivid reds of the picture and to leave the rest to priests and pedants.

IV.

Aretino, like Baudelaire, has been the victim of a legend, a legend which he encouraged, rather than discouraged. When they accused him of being the son of a prostitute, he admitted it. When it was found that he was, really, the son of a shoemaker (*acconciator di scarpe*), which was far more damning, he trumpeted the fact to the world in a letter to the Duke of Medici. Like Baudelaire, he was quite willing to do anything *pour épater la bourgeoisie*, and, like the author of *Les Fleurs du mal*, he paid the penalty. Baudelaire had his Maxime du Camp, of whom Huneker so effectually disposes (see his "The Baudelaire Legend" in *Egoists*); Aretino had his pseudo-Berni. And the resulting legend, in each case, has displayed a surprising persistence, and resistance to the discoveries of scholars.

Nevertheless, despite all legends and overthrowings of legends, the man himself remains a miracle of vividness. The names and titles that were conferred upon him during his

life time are an indication of this. Ariosto won Aretino's undying gratitude by referring to him, in the *Orlando Furioso*, as "the divine Pietro Aretino, the Scourge of Princes." The "Scourge," as Hutton remarks, might more aptly have been called "the Screw of Princes." "*Buffone, cativo*" his own townsman, Meforo Nucci, calls him. He was looked upon, in turn, as a magician and a "prophet" (*propheta divino*).[1] He was the Ward McAllister of his day and refers to himself as "*censor del mondo altero.*"[2] Coming to bless and remaining to curse, he stands forth as a "charlatan of genius." Francis I sends him a chain of gold, with vermilion-colored serpents' tongues, bearing the exergue: "*Lingua eius loquetur mendacium*" ("His tongue speaks lies").[3] Aretino is delighted and is never seen without the chain thereafter; it appears in all his portraits. And yet, this man, whom the mighty college of cardinals could not silence, boasts always that "I speak the truth," insisting that therein lies his strength. De Sanctis implies that he is a "poltroon,"[4] but it is still Aretino's vaunt that "With a goose-quill and a bottle of ink, I mock myself of the universe."

V.

The facts of Aretino's life may be told briefly.[5]

The first that strikes us is the year of his birth, 1492, the same that, with the discovery of America, marks the beginning of a new world. Aretino stands on the threshold of the modern era; and it is, accordingly, not strange if in him we first hear definitely sounded the note of revolt against Petrarch, Dante, Boccaccio and the other old masters of literature, as well as against Plato and Aristotle, Plautus and Terrence, Cicero and Pliny – the dead weight of all the centuries.

[1]Cf. Giovan Battista Diedo (quoted, Appendix II): *Dico che Iddio l'ha fatto di poeta diventar profeta, etc.*

[2]See, in this volume, Miscellaneous Sonnets, IV.

[3]See De Sanctis' essay, Vol. II., and my note.

[4]See the De Sanctis essay, Vol. II., and my note. See also Appendix I.

[5]I am particularly indebted to Hutton in the biographical part of this paper.

It is significant, also, that his birth occurred two years after that of Rabelais, who died (in 1553) three years before Pietro. The latter was born just as the Age of Form, carried to a last fine, hard coldness by Tasso and Ariosto, was drawing to a close. With those two great names, poetry was to die a temporary death. But across the border, barely beyond the span of Aretino's lifetime, were to come Galileo, with his epoch-making discoveries in science, and a new birth of music.

Pietro was born—in a hospital,[1] De Sanctis tells us—in the little but well known town of Arezzo, the birthplace also of Petrarch, Vasari and, in the eleventh century, of Guido of Arezzo, inventor of the modern system of musical notation. His birth occurred some time between the night of Holy Thursday and the morning of Good Friday, April 19-20, as he himself indicates in his sonnet, *In questa chiara sacrosanta notte*.[2] The cynical may find a humorous significance in the date.

In accordance with the Aretine legend, perpetrated by the pseudo-Berni and repeated in the mid-Nineteenth century by such scholarly critics as De Sanctis and Camerini, he was the son of Tita, the "beautiful courtezan," and one Luigi Bacci of Arezzo. Scholarship, however, has shown that his real father was Luca, the cobbler, whose wife Tita was. When, years later, a townsman arose to reveal his real birth, Aretino exclaimed, in his letter to Duke Cosimo: "I tell you, I glory in the title which he, to vilify, has given me; and may it teach the nobility to procreate sons like the one which a cobbler has borne in Arezzo . . . Yes, I am the son of a maker of shoes."[3]

Later, Aretino was accused of passing himself off as the son of the Virgin, and so, as the Antichrist. The controversy

[1] *In uno spedale.*

[2] See, in this volume, *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, I.

[3] "*Dico che mi glorio del titolo che per avilirmi egli dammi, conciosiache ai nobili insegna a procrear figliuoli simili a quello, che un calzolaio ha generato in Arezzo . . . Io natoci d'un acconciator di scarpe.*"

arose over a portrait of the Virgin in a picture of the Annunciation which stood over the church door in Arezzo. Pietro insisted his mother had been the model for the Mary of this picture: "Witness is borne to the sacred goodness of so modest a woman by the fact that she is represented as Mary, Mother of Christ."[1] For Aretino had a typically Italian sentimentality where his mother was concerned, and he put himself to great exertions to get Vasari to have this portrait copied and sent to him, which was done. Doni, Aretino's enemy, made capital of the matter and assailed Pietro as "an Antichrist, a limb of the Great Devil."[2]

As to his early education, Aretino would seem, like Ben Johnson's Shakespeare, to have had "little Latin and less Greek." He went to school, he informs us in one of his letters,[3] "only long enough to learn the *santa croce*," that is, the elements of religion. He appears to have been a poor pupil, stealing his marks and having to be condoned by his teachers ("*componendo ladramente, merito scusa*"); and he brags of the fact that he was "not one of those who pore over the art of the Greeks and the Latins."

All his life long, Aretino hated pedants, with a bitter, inborn, unquenchable hatred. He speaks of them as thosewho "croak"[4] the dead and crucify the living." Pedantry to him is a crime worse than murder. He extends it even into the moral realm: "I tell you, it was pedantry that poisoned the Medici; it was pedantry that cut the throat of Duke Alexander; and, what is worse, it was pedantry that provoked the heresy against our faith by Luther, the greatest pedant of them all."[5] Aretino was wise enough to capitalize his deficiencies. He probably knew little if any Latin—his secretary, Berni, who later claimed that he had "written" much of Aretino's work, was, doubtless, his master's superior in

[1]Letter from Venice, December, 1548. *Lettere*, V., 66.
[2]See the Berni *Vita*, Milano, Daelli, 1864.
[3]*Lettere*, I., 200. See the quotation from this letter in De Sanctis' essay, Vol. II
[4]*gracchiare*.
[5]See De Sanctis' essay.

this—and so, spurning Cicero, Pliny and the rest, he turns instinctively to the vulgate, the dialect of his people and his time.

The legend then goes on to tell us that, at the age of thirteen, Pietro robbed his prostitute mother and fled to Perugia. A more likely story is that he was compelled to leave Arezzo on account of a certain sonnet against indulgencies.[1] We know that in 1512 he was already a verse-maker, for in that year, a volume of his poems was published in Venice[2]. He seems also to have been a student of painting in his early youth.[3]

VI.

Aretino was next attracted to Rome. Rome then, under Julius II, was on the verge of entering upon the golden, the Augustan age, as it has been called, of Leo X., who was the son of Lorenzo de' Medici. The papal court was thronged with artists, men of letters, buffoons and adventurers of every sort; and so, it was the logical, not to say the inevitable dream of every youth who was on the make. It was the Paris, the London and the New York of those days.

At Perugia, Aretino, according to legend, had been apprenticed to a bookbinder. The causes of his leaving are not exactly clear. There is a discredited story, told by Mazzuchelli, as to his having defaced a certain picture of a suppliant Magdalen by going to it at night and painting a lute in the Magdalen's hands. It is more likely that it was, simply, ambition that lured him.

Arrived in Rome, Aretino entered the service of a rich merchant, a Croesus of his day, who, with his magnificence and munificence, made the Holy Father "look like a piker," as we in America would remark. Agostino Chigi, one of the signs of the coming order, in which money was to lord it

[1]Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[2]Published by Nicolo Zopino. See Bibliography, Appendix IV.

[3]*Alquante cose de uno adolescente Aretino Pietro, studioso in questa faculta et in pictura.*" (Prefatory note to first volume of poems).

over the lords of the earth, is a typical figure. On one occasion, he gave a banquet to the papal court on gold and silver plates, which were tossed into the Tiber as soon as used; but Chigi was shrewd enough to have had nets laid to retrieve them. On another occasion, each guest found his coat of arms engraved on the plates from which he ate. Chigi, finally, had himself married by the Pope to one of his own mistresses.

Discharged from the house of Chigi, the legend relates, for having stolen a silver cup, Pietro entered the house of the Cardinal San Giovanni and, upon the death of His Eminence, became valet to Pope Julius II. *Ma era sempre un valletto*, opines De Sanctis. The judgment is a little harsh. Dismissed once more, he entered upon a period of vagabondage, in the course of which he wandered over the greater part of Lombardy, ending up by becoming a Capuchin in a monastery at Ravenna.

Pietro Aretino a monk! The picture is complete. Was it here that he put the finishing touches to his education, not merely in religion, but in vice and the refinements of vice? Was it here that he gathered much of the material for the "Life of Nuns" in the *Ragionamenti*? And was it here he acquired that smattering of sanctity which he later was to make use of in his religious best-sellers—for that is why his *Life of Saint Catherine* and other homilies were written: to sell?

However, Pietro was not cut out for a friar, and he soon tired of the life. Rome beckoned again.

All this, at least, is set forth in the Aretino legend, based upon the *Vita dell' Aretino*, published with the object of vituperating the subject and formerly believed to have been written by Berni. Hutton thinks there is not a word of truth in this account of Aretino's coming from Perugia to Rome and then becoming a Capuchin at Ravenna. There is, the English biographer points out, nothing in the letters to support it. He believes that Aretino first came to Rome in

1516, at the age of 24, "on foot and furnished only with what he had on his back."

At any rate, it is certain that Pietro was in Chigi's employ. As to just what place he held in the house of his rich patron, we are not sure. Those who would play Pietro down assert he was a domestic. Whatever his status, he met there many famous men of the day, including such artists and writers as Raphael, Iacopo Sansovino, Sebastiano del Piombo, Giulio Romano, Bembo, Castiglione, Paolo Giovio and others. Leo X. had succeeded to the pontifical throne in 1513, and the "golden age" was on. We know that Aretino made powerful friends at this time, among them Cardinal Giulio de' Medici, later to become Pope Clement VII.

It was in Rome, under Leo, that Aretino first became acquainted with the vices of the Holy City, those vices which he lambasts with so keen a power of satire in *La Cortigiana* and his other comedies. *The Courtezan* is a take-off on the prostitution of an age.

VII.

Two misfortunes then befell Pietro. One was the death of his patron, Chigi, the other the sudden death of Leo X. In the confusion following the death of Leo and attendant upon the naming of his successor, Aretino found himself launched in his career of journalist. He became a writer of Pasquinades, as the vitriolic articles, affixed to the recently excavated statue of Pasquin in the *Piazza Navona*, were called. Pasquin, or Pasquino, had been, tradition had it, a fifteenth century schoolmaster with a bitter tongue, and the form of journalism named after him lived up to his reputation. Aretino, becoming so well known as a journalist of this type that he even had a tavern named after him,[1] strenuously opposed the election of the pious weakling, Adrian VI., and it was for this reason, probably, that he was forced to flee from Rome, in the year 1522.

[1]The "*Accademia di Pietro Aretino.*"

Supplied with excellent recommendations, through the friendships with the great which he had been wise enough to make, Aretino seems to have visited a number of cities, Milan, Pisa, Ferrara and Bologna, ending at Mantua, where he settled down for a while under the joint protection of the Marquis of Mantua and Cardinal de' Medici. These two powerful personages even indulged in a friendly quarrel over the honor of Pietro's company.

Finally, Pope Adrian inquiring a bit too anxiously after Aretino, the Medici shipped him off to join Giovanni delle bande nere, the leader of Italy's only organized military force at that time. Pietro and Giovanni at once became bosom-cronies. They were, indeed, two of a kind. Barbarossa, the Corsair pirate, was later to remark that Aretino had "the head of a captain, rather than that of a poet," and there was in him, the fact is, no little of the soldier and the buccaneer of letters. Giovanni later died in Aretino's arms, his death being described in one of the finest and most touching letters the latter ever wrote;[1] and Giovanni's son, Cosimo, and the widow, Maria, remained devoted to the "Scourge,"[2] who, it may be, first got his title from his warrior friend.

VIII

The death of Adrian, the last of the *Pontefici barbari*, or foreign Popes, brought Aretino's friend, Cardinal de' Medici, to the chair as Clement VII. Aretino at once returned to Rome. He was now distinctly in the swim. He traveled in style, and the great and powerful were his friends. He wrote sonnets in praise of Clement, the Pope made him a Knight of Rhodes, and all went well—till the little affair of the *Sonnets*.

What happened was this. Giulio Romano, the artist, had executed a number of obscene designs—sixteen of them, each supposed to represent a different *modus sexualis*—and had had them engraved by Marcantonio Raimondi, the first

[1]See Volume II., Letters, III.

[2]See correspondence, Appendix I.

man of his day with the burin. Aretino, according to his own version of the affair, saw the engravings and was inspired to write his famous, and infamous, *Sonetti lussuriosi* as a commentary.

The storm broke. Even the Rome of Clement VII. was shocked. Marcantonio was thrown into prison, Giulio's reputation, a splendid one theretofore, was shadowed, and Pietro had to do some tall talking to get out of the scrape, though he did succeed, by intervening with the Pope, in procuring the release of Raimondi.

In a letter written to Battista Zatti,[1] Aretino says he dedicates his sonnets to "the hypocrites, out of patience with their villainous judgment and with the hoggish custom that forbids the eyes what most delights them." And he exclaimed, in conclusion: "The beasts are more free than we!" Does not this sound like Hecht's preface?

In any event, Rome had now become a trifle too warm for Pietro; so he fled for a time. The legend says he was driven out, and it seems to have amounted to that. Giulio also saved himself by flight. Aretino went back to Arezzo, perhaps to visit his family, then joined his friend, Giovanni, again. He appears to have vacillated for some little time between Giovanni, who wanted him badly, and Rome, eventually returning to Rome and the sunshine of Clement's favor, His Holiness having forgiven and, no doubt, forgotten all.

It was in Rome at this time that the famous attempt to assassinate Aretino was made by Achille della Volta, who stuck a dagger in Pietro's back one night as the latter was riding home alone on horseback. Aretino, badly wounded—mortally, it was believed at first—escaped with a maimed hand, which he carried for the rest of his life. The attempted slaying, which was traced to Giberti, the Pope's counsellor and Aretino's deadly enemy, stirred Rome. Aretino once more left, this time, in October, 1525, for Mantua.

[1] *Lettere*, I., 258.

He did not stay long in Mantua but was soon back with Giovanni delle bande nere. After the death of the sturdy captain, Pietro returned to Mantua and looked about him. His future was uncertain. Rome was out of the question. What was he to do?

It was at this time that he entered upon another phase of his journalistic activity and began issuing his *giudizii*. The *giudizio*, an institution of which Aretino was not the originator, had started out as a respectable enough almanac. In his hands, it became a scandal sheet.

IX.

Venice proved to be the solution. Indeed, it might be said that Venice was the solution of Aretino's life problem. Here alone, in the city of the Doges, under the oligarchical sway of the Medici, was freedom to be had; here alone was safety and security. Read the glowing tribute which Aretino, in one of his letters,[1] pays to Venice. His letters, the truth is, are a part of the Venetian picture in the Sixteenth century. This was the Venice of Shakespeare's plays. Tintoretto was there, and so were Titian and Sansovino, with whom Aretino was to set up a lasting "triumvirate." As Hutton points out, Bellini, Sebastiano, Mansueti, Giorgione and others have preserved for us, in their canvases, the Venice that Pietro knew.

It was in Venice that Aretino began his life-long friendship with Titian, whom he met through Sansovino. The last named commemorated the triple alliance in his painting over the doors of the sacristy of San Marco, and Aretino celebrated it in a sonnet, one of his finest.[2] As to Titian, Pietro became to him a sort of press agent de luxe. He secured many commissions for his painter friend, and it has been thought that he possibly took his percentage on these commissions. (If he did, Hutton remarks, it would be "only

[1]See the quotation from this letter in De Sanctis' essay.

[2]See *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, III.

another mark of modernity in him.") It was Aretino who introduced Titian to Charles V.

Aretino, as we have seen, like Baudelaire, probably had studied painting. At any rate, he soon became a first-rate painting critic. Not only that. He was used by Titian, over and over again, as a model. Three months after he had arrived in Venice, Titian did a portrait of him. In this portrait, Aretino is represented as disdaining the laurels of Homer and Caesar, as described in the sonnet which he sent with the picture to the Marquis of Mantua; the one beginning: "*Togli il lauro per te Cesare e Omero.*"[1] He also served as the model for Pilate (role fitting enough, some would say!) in Titian's *Ecce Homo*. It has been thought, even, that Titian might have made use of Aretino's face—minus the beard, of course—for some of his Christs!

Here, then, in Venice, Pietro comes into his own. His house, the famous *casa Aretina*,[2] is filled with art treasures from all over the world; for Aretino, as Merejkowski tells us, à propos of Michelangelo, was not backward in levying contributions on artists whom he knew and did not know. Sometimes, as in the case of Michelangelo,[3] they may have been reluctant to comply, but they usually were compelled to make at least a show of homage; Aretino and the famed Aretino pen were too potent to be ignored.

While Aretino's house was filled with paintings and rare objects of art, it had almost no books;[4] for Pietro prided himself upon his originality and disdained "the vulpine modesty of the asinine pedants who write books."[5]

In such surroundings as these, he maintained his harem and kept open house for his friends. His cuisine was famous, and he never dined in the town, for he insisted the Venetians

[1] *Ibid.*, IV.

[2] This was "the house of Domenico Bolani, half way between the Ca d'Oro and the Rialto bridge opposite the Rialto in the best part of the Grand Canal." (Hutton, *op cit.*)

[3] See Appendix III.

[4] See Appendix I.

[5] See the quotation from this letter in De Sanctis

did not know how to dine. At times, his own house became so unbearably crowded that he was forced to flee to Titian's abode for a little peace and comfort. He was constantly besieged by the poor, to whom he always gave with a lavish prodigality. He would stand no reproaches on this score. Great souls always spend freely, would be his reply.[1] He resented also any gratuitous advice on the part of his benefactors as to the better husbanding of his income.[2]

In Venice, Aretino's fame grew, and from Venice it spread to all parts of the known world—to the courts of Charles and Francis, to the semi-barbarous wilds of Germany, to India, to Barbarossa on the seas, even to the Rio de la Plata. In France, he was almost a household author,[3] and he seems early to have been translated into German.

His fame showed in other ways. A race of ponies, named after one of his nags—"which Pope Clement gave to me, and which I gave to Duke Federigo"—bore the name, *aretina*. A certain variety of crystal vase was called the *aretino*. His women—former mistresses, near-wives, procuresses, housekeepers and chambermaids—were known, collectively, as the *aretine*. The street in which he lived, the lane that ran past his house, the portion of the Grand Canal that washed his *casa*—all bore his inescapable mark.[4]

And Aretino, by no means neglected to advertise himself. He would not have been the first of press agents, if he had done so. He tells us, in his letters, that he had had his image reproduced in every conceivable form, even on his mirrors and comb-cases; and in addition, he boasted that it was to be seen on "the facades of palaces." He sent a head of himself to Barbarossa, which drew the comment already quoted. His home was all Aretino "Aretino to the right, Aretino to the left," De Sanctis says. For Pietro had dis-

[1]See De Sanctis' note to his essay.
[2]See Appendix I.
[3]See *ibid.*
[4]See De Sanctis; also Camerini, Appendix I.

covered the rather important fact that the world has been known to take a man at his own valuation. He was, De Sanctis adds, a great man on his own say-so.

In such settings as these, he lived his life, because he was "born to live this way." The world might go hang, so long as it did not forget that it owed him a living. To this end, he proposed to see that it did *not* forget. He may have lived, as he says, by the sweat of his ink, but the motive power ("*il motore del suo inchiostro*") was money. He, therefore, had to have publicity. He was of a new commercial age, which is never slow in learning that it pays to advertise.

Blackmail? The word[1] is a harsh one—too harsh, it may be; yet we find it used repeatedly in connection with Pietro. He seldom made downright threats, though he often made specific demands, and generally drove a shrewd and definite bargain. And princes and the powerful paid him, for his favor or for his silence. He often sold his "praises" (*laudi*) as a writer of today sells his manuscripts. There was in him, De Sanctis observes, "a species of mercantile morality." He was the *camorrista* of literature.

There were times when he had pretty hard sledding, financially. This was most of the time. His charities actually seem to have kept him chronically "broke." At one time, he even thought of starting a lottery, and the Marquis of Mantua issued him a patent for the purpose, but the scheme seems to have fallen through. Falling out with the Marquis, he turns to Francis I. and, for a while, seriously thinks of going to France. He distrusted, however, the close watch which the French monarch kept upon his purse strings. Had he gone, he probably would have made it decidely uncomfortable for the Italian princes, including his old friend, Mantua.

X.

It was at this time that Aretino conceived the idea of an epic poem, *La Marfisa*, to be a continuation of the *Orlando*

[1] *Ricatto*, in Italian. See Appendix II.

Furioso of Ariosto. Pietro proceeded to peddle his poem about, not, as a poet of today would do, for a publisher, but for a patron. The prince that came across with sufficient money was to have the pleasure of seeing his house celebrated in the Aretine epic. For the printing of his poem, Aretino wanted a *privilegio* from the Pope. To get it, he pulled all sorts of strings. Finally, the Doge himself, Andrea Gritti, intervened in Pietro's behalf. The *privilegio* at last was granted, along with a collar from the Pope's hands.

Aretino's poem, though it was afterward printed and dedicated to the Marchese del Vasto, is not the important thing. The important thing is the fact that the Doge had seen fit to interfere in his behalf. This definitely established Aretino's position in Venice. He had been, as it were, officially recognized by the government.

Nevertheless, the circumstances surrounding the securing of a patron for the *Marfisa* are interesting, illustrative as they are of the Aretino tactics. After first proposing to dedicate his immortal opus to Federigo Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua, Aretino quarreled with him. We then find him making overtures to Alessandro de' Medici, proposing to sing the "genealogy of the Medici, not without disdain for the house of Mantua." But Alessandro eludes him. So Aretino, at last, turned to the pompous del Vasto, and the epic, which is far from remarkable, was dedicated to him and published in Venice, in 1535.

Another point to be made, in connection with the *Marfisa*, is that, through it, Aretino was reconciled with the Pope, with whom he had been on none too friendly terms since his attempted assassination by the papal favorite, Giberti; Aretino had dealt, in his *giudizii*, none too gently with the sovereign pontiff. The Medici, disliking to have so prominent a citizen on bad terms with the see of Rome, had exerted their influence, and the author of the *Marfisa* agreed to leave out all references which might be offensive.

This probably marks the happiest period of Aretino's

life, the height of his wordly success. The rest of his career was to be embittered by repeated betrayals on the part of his numerous secretaries, by domestic troubles and by literary feuds. But at this time, he could write:

"They say I am the son of a courtezan. It may be so, but I have the heart of a king."

XI.

Aretino seems to have been unfortunate or unwise in his choice of secretaries. At any rate, he had nothing but trouble with them.

The question may be raised as to whether, or why, he needed a secretary. He must have had good use for one, he who was, as the Neapolitan Alessandro Andrea called him, "*il secretario del mondo*"—the "secretary to the world."[1] His hand, too, it must be remembered, had been hopelessly maimed the night that Giberti stabbed him in the back. Moreover, he doubtless felt that his position called for one; for Pietro always insisted on the place which he had stolen for himself in the world being given all the formalities and respect that were its due.

Every one of his young men, as Hutton remarks, appears to have been "a scoundrel and a traitor." Possibly the first was Lorenzo Veniero, who was, also, one of Aretino's dearest friends.

Aretino, there is little doubt, was leading a very corrupt life at this time. Just how corrupt, or what form his corruption took, it might be difficult to say. A little later, there was to be a nasty scandal, as a result of which Pietro was all but driven out of his beloved haven, Venice. Unnatural vice figured in this affair, which has been largely smoothed over by historians. It was patched up some way, and Aretino contrived to live it down. It is, likely, a fact that he was something of a satyr in his habits. He would have been able to give John Addington Symonds light on a certain problem

[1]See Appendix I.

in Greek, as well as in modern ethics. The *Sonetti lussuriosi* and the *Ragionamenti* represent a very real, and for that reason a very sincere, side of the man.

In any case, we know that Veniero fell very much—too much—under his master's influence. When it came to writing filth, Aretino, as his British biographer says, was inimitable. He was, in a manner, as inimitable as Rabelais, and any one who endeavored to imitate him inevitably floundered. That was what happened in the case of Veniero. He produced a work in verse entitled *La Puttana errante* (*The Wandering Whore*), which has been wrongly attributed to Aretino in the past. A close inspection of its style reveals, to any student of Aretino, the fact that it is not the latter's. This work first appeared in 1530. It was dedicated to Aretino, who seems to have fathered it, and the latter sent a copy to the Marquis of Mantua, who smacked his chops over it. A quarrel over the authorship of the thing followed, and Veniero's reputation was shattered.

Aretino was scarcely out of this before he became involved in another literary feud, in the course of which he was accused, as were the *Edinburgh Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* in the case of Keats, of having been the death of a young poet, Antonio Broccardo. The fracas grew out of an attack which young Broccardo had made on Monsignore, later to be Cardinal, Bembo, one of the worst pedants of his day and a man designed by nature to be Aretino's butt, if not his enemy. However, Aretino, for politic reasons, sided with Bembo in counter-attacking Broccardo. After the latter's death, Aretino characteristically penned four sonnets praising his adversary. Later, on Bembo's death, he wrote sonnets praising the Cardinal.

Honors were coming to Pietro now. His home town, Arezzo, at last had awakened to the fact that it had, at least from a wordly point of view, a great son. It, accordingly, conferred upon Aretino the title of *Salvator della patria* (saviour of his country). Then, in 1532, came Ariosto's

Orlando Furioso, with its historic reference to Aretino as "*il divin*" and "*il Flagello de' Principi.*" As we have seen, the title of "Scourge of Princes" probably had been conferred on Aretino long before, not unlikely by his soldier friend, Giovanni delle bande nere. Ariosto merely immortalizes it. Three years later, Ariosto's comedy, the *Negromante*, is dedicated to Aretino by Lodovico Dolce. All this was literary success with a vengeance. Pietro, the great faker and, as it were, the scavenger of literature—"*il condottière della letteratura*," Titian called him—the "street-car conductor of literature," if we Americanize the idiom—Pietro, the blackmailer and the paid panegyrist, had at last won recognition, become respectable through his very vices!

Nevertheless, he had many enemies. This, of course, with a man of Aretino's temperament and his habits of the literary *abattoir*, was unavoidable. He would have been, one imagines, lost and unhappy without them; he would have suspected himself. At the same time, he had the faculty of making capital out of the worst calumny. In 1532, for example, the Rialto was placarded with the announcement that no bank or shop would trust him:

Non è banca
Non è botiga a farti credenza

and also with the report that he "had no wood to warm himself at the fire:"

Chi non ha legna da scaldarsi al focho.

He was always bankrupt, but that was part of his scheme of things. His popularity with the great ones remained undiminished. Luigi Gritti, natural son of the Doge of Venice and the latter's ambassador in Constantinople, writes urging Aretino to join him to "make me happy with your charming conversation." Florence, too, tried to steal him from Venice. Alessandro de' Medici twice attempted to lure Pietro there, promising him the Strozzi Palace if he would come.

When Paul III. (Alessandro Farnese) became Pope, he

was so friendly that Aretino, for once, came near giving up his Venice to return to the Holy City; but he was wise enough not to do so. He had had enough of courts and their ways. For his reasons in declining, see the letter on the subject which he wrote to Monsignor Guidiccione.[1] See, also, his sonnet: *Sett' anni traditori ho via gettati*,[2] describing the "seven traitor years" which he had "thrown away" in the papal service.

Then came the chain of gold from Francis. This was the recognition in the world of affairs which Ariosto had conferred in the world of letters. Aretino had become an institution.

XII.

Continuing his literary, or near-literary, activity with tremendous force, publishing comedies, religious works, his obscene *Ragionamenti*, and keeping up all the time his journalistic letters, Aretino led an amazingly full life and displayed an astounding vitality. Honored by Ariosto and by Francis, he drew to the end amid domestic troubles and more broils.

Aretino never married within the law, he disdained the institution of matrimony; but he had children by his mistresses and adored his offspring. There was his daughter, Adria, whose mother was Caterina Sandella, one of Titian's blonde types and a member of the harem at *casa Aretina*. Her father spends much time in getting Adria properly married off to the worthless young Diovatelli Rota and levies a tax on his princely friends to provide the dowry which her prospective husband demands. The marriage was not a success. Adria, after twice returning to the paternal roof, died in 1554. There was also Austria, likewise the daughter of La Sandella, probably, and of whom Pietro was almost — but not quite—as fond as he was of Adria. His children, he maintained, were "legitimate in my heart."

[1]See, in Vol II., *Letters*, XV.
[2]*Miscellaneous Sonnets*, II.

With Pierina Riccia, the abandoned wife of one of his secretaries (Polo Bartolini), Aretino carried on a touching affair, if affair it might be called. She was a consumptive, and Aretino, like a mother, nursed her back to health, only to have her abandon him for a younger lover. Four years later, she returned, and he took her back. She again fell ill, and he nursed her again. She died, this time, and her memory colored the remainder of Aretino's life. Years later, he exclaimed: "I think I died with her."

Caterina and Pierina were the two chief women in his life, it would seem, but he had numerous affairs and escapades.

Aretino frequently became mixed up with husbands. He had no hesitancy in using them when he wanted their wives; and when a husband grew annoyed at Pietro's "Platonic" intentions, as did Giovanni Antonio Sirena, he was capable, at once, of waxing virtuously indignant and of strutting like a peacock.

"My pen has made Madame Angela Sirena immortal . . . Do you not know that there is not a woman in the world who would not be proud to be chastely sung and celebrated in my verses? A time will come when this very letter that I send you and which I deign to sign with my own hand will be a title of pride and nobility for your son."

And, needless to say, Aretino saw to it that the letter was published.

When one of his harem, Marietta d'Oro, wished to leave him, Aretino married her off to his secretary, who at that time happened to be Ambrogio degli Eusebii, aged 20. Then, having solved, as he thought, that problem, Aretino sent young Eusebii off on an embassy to Francis I. He even went part way with him to be sure he left. While he was gone, Marietta looted his house and sailed for Cyprus. Aretino was the laugh of the town, but it is to be doubted if he greatly cared.

It was this same Eusebii who lost at play the six hundred *scudi* which Francis I. had consigned to him for his master. The money was lost in the house of Cardinal Gaddi, with whom Aretino was on none too good terms, anyway; and this led to a row between Pietro and the Cardinal. His Eminence, eventually, made good the money lost.

Later, Eusebii lost eight hundred crowns which he had received in England, got two hundred of them back, then lost these (as he wrote Aretino) in a shipwreck. The last we hear of him is from the Rio de la Plata, whence he writes to say that he is "preaching Aretino's name" there.

Leonardo Parpaglioni, another secretary, robbed Aretino of two hundred *scudi* while Nicolò Franco, still another amanuensis, became his bitterest enemy and detractor. Franco, a pedant of the pedants and a "parasite of letters,"[1] in the controversy that followed, asserted that he had "written" a good part of Aretino's work, and that his former master was "an ignorant dunce." The truth of the matter is, Franco was Pietro's superior in academic learning—which Aretino disdained—and probably did furnish some of the material for the religious works. But Aretino's best work, as Hutton says, was done before Franco appeared upon the scene.

In 1538, Aretino published his first book of *Letters*, printed by Marcolini. These letters, he tells us, had been collected through "the Love of my young men for what I do." Among these "young men" must have been Franco. But in November of the same year, we find Franco publishing his own book of letters (*Pistole vulgari*) in fine format. This was too much. Aretino could not stand a rival in his own house; so he turned Franco out. In later editions of Aretino's own letters, the name, Franco, has entirely disappeared. But Franco's enmity, as has been hinted, was a potent one. It led, indirectly at least, to the calumnies of the

[1]Hutton's phrase.

pseudo-Berni *Vita* and the fostering of the Aretine legend.

In the course of the Franco quarrel, Eusebii, who had succeeded Franco as Aretino's secretary, stabbed his predecessor in the face, and Aretino supported him in court and even made him parade up and down in front of the house where Franco was lying wounded. The incident is typical.

When Franco fell ill, Aretino forgave him, but Franco, as soon as he was well again, renewed his attacks. Aretino prophesied he would die on the gallows, as he did. He was hanged by Pius V. for publishing an obscene work, the *Priapeia*.

XIV.

All this time, Aretino was playing politics on a big scale—world politics. He must have a finger in every pie, no matter how impressive the size. When Charles V. imprisons Clement VII., we find him writing to the Emperor urging him to liberate the pontiff, and writing to the Holy Father, urging him to forgive the Emperor. The nerve of the man is almost beyond belief. He plays a hide-and-seek game with Francis, finally, chiefly on account of the French monarch's lack of generosity, lining up against him with Charles. When Francis made an alliance with the Turks, against Charles and the Empire, Aretino wrote him an insulting letter which, as Hutton remarks, "reverberated throughout Europe."

On the assassination of Alessandro de' Medici, Duke of Florence, in fulfilment of an apparent prophecy of Aretino's, Cosimo, the son of Giovanni delle bande nere, became Duke and Aretino's new protector.

A second attempt to assassinate Aretino occurred in 1539, in the course of a quarrel between him and Ercole II., successor to Federigo Gonzaga, Marquis of Mantua. This trouble soon blew over, however.

XV

Then came the fitting climax to Aretino's picaresque career, when, upon the visit of the Emperor Charles V. to

Venetian territory, a personal, very warm and human meeting occurred between the foremost prince of his age and the Scourge of Princes. This meeting took place, in July, 1543, at Peschiera, near Verona, where Charles, upon catching sight of Aretino, spurred his horse toward him, saluted him with affection and then rode along with Aretino at his right hand, conversing amiably. Later, when the stage was set, Aretino read his *Capitolo* and then went in to dine with His Majesty, again at the royal right hand. Charles urged Pietro to accompany him, but the latter declined, preferring to return to Venice.

What a triumph was here, for the legendary son of a prostitute, the defrocked friar and vagabond of tradition, the author of the *Sonetti lussuriosi* and the Prince of Blackmailers! Ariosto's *flagellum principum* and Francis' chain of gold may have marked the definite achievement of literary success, such as it was, and of worldly triumph, but this meeting with Charles was, veritably, Pietro Aretino's Field of the Cloth of Gold.

XVI

If Aretino, at this time, was probably the most powerful man in Italy, perhaps in the world, the reason is to be found in the new force which he had discovered, that force which we today would call "the power of the press." Aretino himself regarded it as the power of his pen. He himself did not realize the right Promethean fire with which he was playing. All he knew was that he had a tremendous instrument in his hands, and he employed it quite as unscrupulously as it, consistently, has been employed since his time. He was capable—see his *Letters*—of being quite as hypocritical as the press of today.

We have seen, largely, who his worldly friends were—kings and emperors, dukes and doges, popes and prelates—and there would be little point in repeating their names here. A glance at the names of those to whom his letters are addressed is indicative. As to his literary friends, Hutton

lists: Ariosto; Bembo; Machiavelli; Guicciardini; Vittoria Colonna, she for whom Michelangelo platonically pined away; Annibal Caro; Monsignore della Casa; Bernardo Tasso; Benedetto Varchi; Trissino; Speroni; Molza; Agnuolo Firenzuola; Paolo Manuzio; Alamanni; Bernardo Accolti; Guidiccione; Benedetto Marcello; Paolo Giovio; Lorenzo Veniero; Girolamo Parabasco; Bernardo Clesio, Cardinal of Trent; and Veronica Gambara. It is the authors' blue book of an age.

Many of these ostensible friendships, when not inspired by fear, were due, it is probable, to policy; but a surprising number of them were deep-rooted and sincere. As to just how much illusion the writers of the time harbored with regard to the work of Pietro, one cannot say. It is hard to get a perspective on one's own generation.

As to Aretino's friendships among artists, they included: Titian; Sansovino; Giovanni da Udine; Sodoma; Leone Leoni; Moretto; Tintoretto; Vasari; Sebastiano del Piombo; Luigi Anichi and Marcantonio Raimondi, engravers; Giulio Romano; Raphael; and Michelangelo. A good account of Aretino's relations with Michelangelo will be found in Merejkowski's work. He met Raphael in Rome, at the house of his early patron, Chigi. "It is a part of the fame of Aretino," says Hutton, "that such men as Michelangelo were his friends." We see, however, in Michelangelo's case, that the nature of the "friendship" was, upon occasion, somewhat dubious. His very real friendship with Titian — who was, in all likelihood, as fleshly in his appetites as the blonde women he painted, or as Aretino himself — was the noblest side of the great Scourge's life.

XVII

Pietro's last years were of a piece with the rest of his weird life. He was crowned by academies. His second book of *Letters*, published in 1542, was dedicated to Henry VIII. of England, who gave the author, in return, a promise—it proved to be no more than a promise — of a reward of three

hundred crowns. Aretino was led to accuse the British ambassador of having stolen the money, and this brought on one of the scenes of his old age, when the ambassador, accompanied by six armed men, waylaid Aretino, then an old man, and beat him. Aretino then had to suffer the reproaches of his numerous enemies for not avenging himself. But the general feeling was with Aretino. The shading which De Sanctis, for example, gives this affair is misleading.

In 1550, Aretino's native village rises up to honor him again, this time with the high-sounding title of *gonfaloniere.*[1] In payment for a sonnet praising Pope Julius III. he receives one thousand *scudi*, and in June of 1550, the pontiff creates him a cavalier of St. Peter, with—what was more to Aretino's taste, for he always preferred cash to empty honors—a pension of eighty *scudi* a year.

It was then that there came talk of the cardinal's hat. Titian interested himself in the matter with Charles V., who looked favorably upon the idea. But there was a hitch somewhere; the hat was not offered. The question is, if it had been, would Aretino have left Venice, his "rock of safety," to return to Rome?

Though he was not made a cardinal, the Pope did invite him to come to Rome as his guest, telling him it would be a second jubilee, and that all the world would flock to see him. Drawn, possibly, by a lingering hope of the red hat, Aretino journeyed, old as he was, to the city of the seven hills and was splendidly received. They endeavored to persuade him to remain there, but he declined.

He returned to die in his loved Venice, not in the famous *casa Aretina*, where he had spent so many colorful years[2] he had been forced to give that up in 1551—but in his new home, the house of Leonardo Dandolo in the parish of San Luca on the Riva del Carbin.

In 1556, one of his oldest friends, Doni, the writer, turned

[1]Standard-bearer.
[2]About twenty, in all.

on him and attacked him, prophesying his death. Aretino died that year.

XVIII.

It is with the extremities of his career, his birth and death, that the detractors and vilifiers of Aretino seem to have done their worst. It is at these points that the Legend steps in to add its touch of mendacious picturesqueness. We have seen Pietro, according to the Legend, born the son of a prostitute, robbing his mother at the age of thirteen, kicked out of Rome for his *Sonnets*, becoming a Capuchin, etc. And now, with his death—

He died, the prevailing accounts tell us, by falling over backward from his chair in a fit of laughter—ribald laughter, the followers of the *Vita* add. Look up Aretino in the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and you will find this account repeated there, that he died in a fit of laughter at an obscene story told him by one of his own sisters. Camerini[1] tells us that Aretino's sisters[2] (he makes it plural) were narrating to him the experiments in lust which they had made in a *bordello* of Arezzo—"experiments," he says, "of which Giulio Romano had not dreamed in those designs of his which Aretino illustrated with his pen and Marco Aurelio[3] Raimondi with his burin."

It is Camerini, also, who gives the story of the holy oils.

It is, from a literary point of view, all very satisfying, especially when rounded out by the cosmic insolence of that ascribed epitaph, which, in its Latin version, reads:

Intactus Deus est illi, causamque rogatus
Hanc dedit. Ille, inquit, non mihi notus erat.

That "*non mihi notus erat*" is superb but, in all probability, apocryphal.

The facts seem to be that Aretino did die by falling backward from his chair. His death was due to apoplexy. *Il divino*

[1]See Appendix I.

[2]Apparent family relationships in Aretino's case are almost always to be distrusted.

[3]Sic.

had become, in the words of Cosimo de' Medici, *il mortal Pietro Aretino*. No sooner was he dead than he became a name that was not mentioned in the presence of a lady.[1]

XIX

This, then, was the end of Pietro Aretino, the first modern journalist, perhaps the greatest blackmailer in all history, the first truly modern exponent of the "poison pen," to lift one of the pet phrases of our own brethren of the yellow press. There is a constant temptation, in the case of Aretino, to pile up names and adjectives; he lends himself to it so readily. But when the adjectives and the picturesque and picaresque titles have been sifted, what remains?

Edward Hutton calls him "the founder of the European press" and adds that he "used the hitherto unsuspected weapon of publicity with an incomparable appreciation of its power." For "European press," one might read "modern press."

"And if we add to this," continues the Englishman, in the introduction to his biography, "that he contrived a weapon for his own ends which has in our day come to be more powerful than any established government or elected parliament or hereditary monarchy—publicity, the press—there is more than sufficient excuse for this book. . . . Aretino's virtues . . . are always those of a journalist, never those of a man of letters. His strength is in his spontaneity, his ability to write what is in his head almost without a second thought."

And, it may here be parenthesized, is not this the prime virtue of the modern newspaper man—his spontaneity? Your present-day reporter also writes "what is in his head, almost without a second thought;" and if he does not happen, usually, to have a head, it is that which accounts for the poor quality of our contemporary journalism. Aretino, who, in his more pompous letters, is the prototype of the

[1]See De Sanctis' shudders.

twentieth-century editorial-writer, in his *giudizii* and his Pasquinades is, frequently, the antecedent of the rewrite-man; while in his *Ragionamenti*, he is the Ring Lardner, risen out of the local room.

Yes, Aretino was the first of the tribe of "yellow" journalists. He told the truth, not lies—"*per finger no, ma per predire il vero*,"[1] he assures us in one of his sonnets—and he strutted all over the shop about it; but so, too, does Mr. Hearst. Something, it is to be presumed, may depend on the manner in which the truth is told, and the act of telling it may readily become the worst form of blackmail. In any event, the man who goes in for it makes the discovery of a certain power; he makes powerful friends and powerful enemies; and that is what Aretino did. If the latter were living today, there is not much doubt that he would be one of our "Napoleons of the Press."

XX.

It is interesting to note that modern journalism grew out of the Renaissance, in the person of Pietro Aretino, the greatest of the Renaissance decadents. Aretino revolutionized the character of two of the nearest approaches to the thing that the Revival of Learning had sported: the Pasquinade and the *giudizio*.

Pasquin was a fifteenth-century schoolmaster. Like many schoolmasters, he had a scurrilous tongue. The Pasquinade, therefore, retains the qualities of its nominal founder: scholasticism and scurrility.

"Pasquin, indeed," says Hutton, "is of the modern world and is a sign of the return of free satire, anonymous and violent and often as vulgar and salacious as anything in antiquity. He is not really of the people: he is the creation of the learned, of scholars and men of letters. He is part of the Renaissance, and, in the age of Aretino, was bound to be abused. But he was already famous before Aretino trans-

[1] See *Miscellaneous Sonnets*, IV.

formed him for his own purposes during the election of Pope Adrian VI."

The Pasquinades were originally attached to the statue of Pasquino, but they seem very early to have been distributed in the form of fly-sheets, in the manner of the *istorie* or "extras" which are cried in the first act of *La Cortigiana*. The first Pasquinades were extremely pedantic; they were of the scholars, not of the people. Aretino transformed these exercises and made them popular, for his own purpose, which at the time happened to be the advancement of Cardinal de' Medici's claim to the papal throne. Aretino turned out his Pasquinades, furiously and daily. The fact that he "lost the election" mattered little; he had made himself famous—and infamous. It was at this time that amazement was expressed at the college of cardinals' not being able to silence him. It was the old order against the new; the latter had shown its teeth and won, even in the temporary victory of the old.

And when, later, the Doge of Venice interfered to make peace between Aretino and the Pope, it was but another sign that the press had been recognized and had to be tolerated, whether the powers that be liked it, altogether, or not. A new social entity had been discovered, public opinion, the new tyrant of the new democracies. The same might be said of Francis I.'s chain of gold; kings as well as doges bowed.

Aretino revolutionized the *giudizio*, as well as the Pasquinade. The former, before his time, had been an *Old Moore's Almanac*. Pietro cut out the astrology and the weather and, as the modern journalist would say, "played up the news," putting in, often, even a little more "punch" than would get by the average copy desk of today. The *giudizii* had at first appeared once a year, but who ever heard of a once-a-year newspaper? Aretino issued one whenever he felt the need of self-expression or money, particularly the latter.

Indeed, Aretino's writings as a whole constitute a sort of daily journal of his times. Their quality, with the exception of the *Ragionamenti* and his plays, is essentially ephemeral. It is because their author so sums up his age, the chromatic *cinquecento*, that they are worth preserving and worth reading.

XXI.

Aretino is not only the first modern journalist; he is the first modern critic of painting.

Like Baudelaire, whom Courbet taught to mix a palette, Pietro, it is likely, studied painting in his youth, and like Baudelaire, he retained a keen interest in the art all his life, while his dearest and closest friendships lay among painters. We know, at any rate, that he was lampooned by his enemies as having been formerly a painter;[1] but if it was the fact that he had been, there was in it nothing strange. Many a writer has walked through the studio, returned to it and remained to chat. Aretino's chattings ("*ciancie*," he would have called them) are our first modern art criticism.

Speaking of this, Eugenio Camerini says:

"The truth is, Aretino, in his writings, displays sometimes the desire to compete with the rich palette of his painter friends. His familiarity with Titian and his affection for the art helped him sufficiently. Certainly, the best colorists among French writers of today have served their apprenticeship to art, either as students or as admirers. Dante drew. Aretino was fond of decoration and color-harmony, both in his habits of thought and in his person; *dissonance appeared only in his actions.*"

The italics here are the present writer's own; they are employed to stress what impresses him as being an important point in any "psyching" which may be attempted of Pietro.

The fact would seem to be, Aretino had a natural inclina-

[1] " . . . *Non havessi lassato il tuo pennello,*
Se pyntor fustu un tempo, come io odo."
(Quoted by A. Luzio, *Pietro Aretino nei primi suoi anni a Venezia*. See Bibliography, Appendix IV.)

tion toward the art of painting, which was piqued by association. When a man is found consorting with painters or writers, barbers or plumbers, as a class, it generally means that he has some predilection for one pursuit or the other. In Rome, we find Aretino, with Raimondi and Giulio Romano, getting into a scrape over the artists' designs and Pietro's *Sonnets*. When he goes to Venice, his friend, Sansovino, makes him acquainted with Titian, and the three set up their "triumvirate." The triple friendship, so far as we are able to judge, was a very genuine one on all sides. It is easy to point out that Aretino was useful to both Titian and Sansovino in the capacity of press agent. In a way, he *was* their press agent. He introduced Titian to Charles V. and put himself out of the way to procure commissions for his painter friend. We have seen that he was accused of taking a "rake-off" on these orders. But there was, in this three-sided friendship, something far deeper than this. Any one who doubts it has but to read Aretino's letters to Titian. They are, by far, the sincerest he ever penned. In these, he is human, not pompous, and at least one of them, the one describing the view from his window in Venice, has a true plastic quality.[1]

In these letters, too, we glimpse a total absence of "side" between the men. Titian, like the women he painted, had a good, lusty appetite for life that almost rivaled Aretino's own. We see him as a chap who liked a good bottle of wine, a pretty girl and a well-cooked thrush.[2] Highest compliment of all, Titian often painted in the *casa Aretina*, the walls of which he decorated with his brush. And Aretino sought the painter's opinion on everything from the character of his daughter Adria's face to the color qualities of a landscape. He took a keen interest in his friend's work, and his description of the "Annunciation," now lost to us, is a bit of verbal coloring in the master's own style.

[1]See De Sanctis' essays.
[2]See Letters, XI.

No, there would seem to be some deeper explanation of this triumvirate than mere utility.

"We may, perhaps, ask," writes Hutton, "what can have been the attraction of such a man as Aretino for the noble Titian? This certainly: that Aretino, who respected nothing else, respected the arts. But to ask such a question is to misunderstand not only Aretino, but still more Titian himself. A thousand things bound them together. . . . for Aretino was undoubtedly one of the most living and the most rich personalities of his day: he could give Titian as much as he took from him . . . he knew everything about everybody, he enjoyed enormously everything about everybody. His intellect, too, was of a high order, he understood everything and perhaps everybody. In a sense he must have completed Titian . . . He must not only have completed, but have amused Titian. Titian painted him, and he certainly never had a more splendid or a richer subject. He painted him over and over again: in the portrait now in the Pitti Palace, then in that one in the Chigi Palace at Rome. He appears, too, as Pilate in the *Ecce Homo*, now in Vienna. They enjoyed life together intellectually, socially and sensually."

Pietro sat as a model to other painters, including Sebastiano del Piombo. Of the latter's portrait of the Scourge, Vasari, in his *Vita di Sebastiano*, gives us the following description:

"He made a portrait also, at this time, of M. Pietro Aretino, and he did it in such a manner that, beyond obtaining a likeness, he achieved a stupendous bit of painting, through the five or six different shades of black which he obtained in the subject's clothes: velvet, satin, sarcenet, damask and cloth, while over it all trailed the blackest of black beards, as living and life-like as possible. In his hand, he (Aretino) has, in this portrait, a branch of laurel and a tablet, on which is inscribed the name of Clement VII., with, in front of this, two masks, the one beautiful for its expression of virtue, the other for its appearance of vice. This painting

Pietro gave to his native province, and his fellow citizens have placed it in the public hall of their *Consiglio*, thus honoring the memory of the genius who is their townsman and receiving no less honor from him."

Aretino had a real *flair* for painting criticism. In his criticism, he is a pure realist, of the school of Titian. He has no suspicion that painting may have any other end. He would not have appreciated the Byzantines or other primitives. But in this, he was true to his age. It is only within the last century that something beyond realism has come into painting.

We should be grateful for one thing, and that is, that he was not a moralist in his criticism. De Sanctis finds fault with him on this score, but De Sanctis is wrong. There is no reason why the sight of a beautiful landscape should awake "any moral impression or any elevation of soul." Aretino was not a nature-worshiper or a theorist of any sort. He was a pure sensualist in his reactions, and this it was that would have made him an excellent critic of the art of painting at any time from his own century to, let us say, the advent of Manet.

XXII.

What, finally, is the literary significance, the literary importance of Pietro Aretino? This question has been answered, to a degree, at the outset of this paper; the answer is the justification of the present translation of Aretino's representative works. But a few details remain to be sketched in.

In the first place, Pietro had few if any illusions with regard to his own literary quality. Just as he made capital of his lack of academic knowledge by turning on the pedants, so he sometimes bragged about the manner in which he "got by," as we would say, in a literary way. In his sonnet, *Togli il lauro*, he tells us, quite frankly, "*Non son poeta*"—"I am not a poet"—and boasts that, while "neither a poet nor

an emperor," he yet has filched the laurels from Homer's and from Caesar's brow. In this sonnet also he asserts that his style has been his star, and that his reputation is due, not to fictionizing (*per finger no*) but to speaking the truth. We know that, while with unwise worldlings, he sometimes passed as a "learned man," he himself had no such illusions; and we know, too, that he had a vast and slightly overweening respect for writers and men of letters; these latter were the only ones towards whom he seems to have cherished a salutary fear; a mere prince of the earth might be cast down by the thunder of the famed Aretino pen, but a minor pedant, through the employment of a similar weapon, might work his ruin.

What was this "Aretino style?" Aretino himself tells us that the phrase was coined through "the hairsplittings of pedants," but he nourished the legend. Speaking of Aretino's style, Hutton is worth quoting once more:

"Aretino's page is full of life, hard to read, spontaneous and yet packed tight, worked upon and forged, full of queer instances and odd comparisons, glittering with wit and every sort of comic exaggeration. Such work does not exist outside his pages. His successor was Rabelais; but also Molière. He has the robust joy of the one, but something of the intellectual charm of the other."

On the whole, Hutton finds him "the most significant and certainly the nearest to life of any Italian writer of his day."

Aretino's greatest contribution lies in the breath of realism which, in his revolt against pedantry and academicism, he brought to literature. As his British biographer remarks, his work has "the smell of the city" and "the odour of life." It has all the futile turmoil, all the grandiloquent and sterile gestures of the metropolis.

But Aretino was not always, by any means, the realist and the modernist. As a matter of fact, by far the greater bulk of his prose work, if we take his pompously inflated letters

(many of them)[1] and his turgidly pietistic religious writings over against his *Ragionamenti* and his plays, is of the old, rather than of the newer school.

Among the severer of Aretino's critics were the Frenchmen, Bayle and Montaigne. The former wrote:

"This man, who is so satiric a poet, is prodigal of his praises to the last degree. We find the most pompous hyperboles and the most rampant flatteries in those letters which he wrote to kings and princes, to the generals of armies, to cardinals and to the other great ones of the world. To such an extent is this true that one sees in him the airs of an amateur, who is endeavoring to make himself feared or to extort favors, and all the baseness of an author who is demanding, very humbly, a morsel of bread. He draws upon the most touching expressions to depict his poverty; and he resorts even to the language of Canaan—makes use of devout phrases, that is—the better to excite compassion and to move to charity those persons who look to God for the recompense of their good works."

Bayle then goes on to speak of the letters.

"We have," he says, "six volumes of the letters, which are not worth a great deal (*qui ne valent pas grand' chose*) . . . It is a dry work, and one very like an unfurnished house in a waste and sandy place."

Mènage also has something to say on the subject.

"I have read," he says, "all the letters of Pietro Aretino, without finding in them anything which I was able to make use of in any of my books. There is nothing but the style to be had from their reading."

While Mènage praises the style, Montaigne condemns it as: "A fashion of speaking that is puffed and gushy, made up of ingenious points, in truth, but far-fetched and fantastic."

[1]On the other hand, compare his letters to his real cronies, such as the one to Girolamo Agnelli, thanking him for his gift of wine (*Letters, VII.*) or the one to the Count Manfredo di Collalto, acknowledging a gift of thrushes (*Letters*, XI.).

The author of the *Essays*, nevertheless, concedes Aretino a "certain eloquence."

Commenting on such passages as these, Camerini makes what impresses one as being a very good criticism of Aretino's critics.

"Bayle and Montaigne," he says, "were not able to savor Aretino's style, for the reason that the one was not looking for and the other did not grasp that species of erudition which is to be found in Aretino's writings: an erudition based, not upon ancient standards or solemn facts, but upon a feeling for life, the same erudition that Macaulay was to transform into a splendid picture of the life of nations."

And this, finally, is Aretino's contribution: that, breaking the chains of a tradition that had become slavery, he was the first to declare war on the tribe of pedants, whom, like the poor, we have always with us. The fact that his revolt was motivated by purely selfish reasons means, simply, that it was a vital matter with him.

XXIII.

And yet, Aretino's direct influence, even upon his own literature, has been surprisingly small. He may have had "the root of all good literature in him, in his freedom from pedantry and closeness to life,"[1] but it was slow in telling. His influence was greater in France than in Italy. It is generally conceded that Rabelais owes him a distinct debt, as does Molière, particularly in his Tartuffe. We do not know just how direct Shakespeare's indirect debt was, but Aretino's Marescalco would appear to have been the antecedent of Malvolio, though it cannot compare with the Elizabethan character in full-flavored richness. But the Venice of Pietro *was* the Venice of Shakespeare's early plays, from whatever source the English poet got them.

Otherwise, Aretino's influence in English has been almost entirely negligible. Sir Thomas Wyatt, in his *Penitential*

[1]Hutton, *op. cit.*, p. 264.

Psalms, owes Aretino something; the early part of Sir Thomas' work was translated, and the latter part imitated, from the Italian writer's *Sette Psalmi*. One agrees with Hutton, however, that Sir Thomas is "very dull stuff."

We also find Thomas Nash referred to by Lodge as "the true English Aretino." This seems to have been due, chiefly, to the fact that Nash, like Aretino, employed the vernacular for comic effect and was given to the coining of "boisterous" words from other languages. Aside from this, there is not much in common between the two.

Here, it may be remarked that Shakespeare also shares these same qualities with Aretino, and it was only a few years later that he was to perform his own experiments in the use of the vernacular (also for "comic relief").

References to Aretino in the sixteenth century are fairly numerous. Hutton cites a number from Gabriel Harvey's *Marginalia*, published under the editorship of G. C. Moore Smith at the Shakespeare Head Press, Stratford-upon-Avon, in 1913.

XXIV.

As to translations, Aretino, as stated, has been practically untouched in English. Hutton says that the only translation into English of any of his works was *The Crafty Whore*, published in London in 1658 and taken partly from the *Ragionamenti*. This is not precisely correct.[1] There is a translation of the *Dialogues*, made by I do not know whom, that is sold by the "bookleggers" at an exorbitant price. There is also a very lewd rendering of the *Sonetti lussuriosi*, by "an English poet," rumored to be from the pen of Oscar Wilde, but which, those who have read it assure me, Oscar undoubtedly never saw. At the time I write this, I have not been able to get hold of either of these translations. That of the *Dialogues* is, probably, the 6-volume one published by Isodore Liseux in 1889.[2]

[1]The author catches himself up in a footnote, with a reference to Liseux.
[2]I have, since, confirmed this.

There would seem, then, to be room for a translation of at least the representative works, not for the smut-hounds, whose exclusive property Aretino has been in the past, but for the general cultivated reader, as well as for scholars whose working language happens to be English.

XXV.

Aretino's ultimate importance lies, not so much in what he wrote as in what he was, what he stood for. With Ariosto, Titian and Machiavelli, he *is* the *cinquecento*. But the others, even Cellini, invoked the past; Aretino insulted it—insulted it, wholesomely.

His archetypal enemy is Luther, from whose half-baked pedantry has sprung the unlovely phenomenon of Protestantism, which achieves a horrible culmination in the barren and ugly little frame meeting house of the American prairies. Luther appealed to the individual conscience and, by so doing, set up a new tyranny, the tyranny of the illiterate. Aretino appealed only to—Pietro Aretino and his will; but in the course of the process, he set in motion the tyranny of the modern press.

Hutton calls Aretino "the negation of the Renaissance." He was, if we take "Renaissance" in its narrower sense, that of the Revival of Classical Learning; but this, as any undergraduate student of history knows, was not the whole Renaissance; it was merely one side of the Renascence. Let us say that Aretino was, rather, the Renaissance on its last legs, the Renaissance gone to seed. He represents the well known phenomenon of decadence. There is no need to get out our Paul Bourget and our Havelock Ellis to tell us this. What a glorious red rag he would have been to that Philistine bull, Max Nordau!

The trouble is, the word decadence is too frequently garbled to imply something naughty, like the *Fleurs du mal*.

Suppose we take it, for once, in its true technical sense,[1] as a process of breaking up and breaking down—as an expansion, a pushing out and back of the limits of language, life and thought. In this process, the old becomes a manure-heap to fertilize the growth of the new. But from this rich and decomposing earth there sometimes spring strange, poisonous flowers, like the mandragora. Of such was Pietro Aretino, the nightshade of the sixteenth century.[2]

[1]See Bourget's paper on Baudelaire in *Essais sur la psychologie contemporaine.* The passage will be found translated by Havelock Ellis in the latter's introduction to John Howard's English version of Huysmans' *A Rebours* (Lieber and Lewis, 1922).

[2]Alfred Semerau (*Pietro Aretino, Ein Bild aus der Renaissance, Verlag Karl Konig, Wien und Leipzig*) objects to Pietro's being termed "*den Caesar Borgia der Literatur.*'

THE DIALOGUES OF NANNA AND ANTONIA, *held in Rome under a fig tree, composed by the divine Aretino for his pet monkey, Capricio, and for the correction of the three states of women. It has been given to the printer in this month of April,* MDXXXIIII, *in the illustrious city of Venice.*

THE DIALOGUES

[*I Ragionamenti*]

of

PIETRO ARETINO

"The perverse and slightly theological mind
of my master, Pietro Aretino."

from

The Very Pleasant Memoirs
of the
Marquis de Bradomin

Translator's Note

Aretino's DIALOGUES *and his play,* LA CORTIGIANA, *are what Hutton calls "his terrible Medusa works." In the* RAGIONAMENTI, *Aretino gives a vitriolic picture of the life of his time, a picture focusing on the life of women. After portraying the life of nuns, the life of married women and the life of courtezans, he comes to the bitterly satiric conclusion that the courtezan's life is the best and most honorable one; and we hear his Antonia advising Nanna to make her daughter a prostitute. Read what Antonia has to say about "the best profession." You will find there a surprisingly modern view of the subject, one which a Bernard Shaw might have had in mind when he wrote his "unpleasant" plays.*

Obscene? Yes. But only as the life of the Cinquecento *was obscene. Speaking of this, Aristide Raimondi in the introduction to his edition of the* RAGIONAMENTI, *says: "His men and women have but one obsession: Coitus. Beyond this, nothing. Absorbed in this, monks and nuns, women of every sort and men of every kind protract their lives in a crude solar reverberation which uncovers every nudity and every ugliness. Surrounding this crowd, the desert; and this is the manner in which Aretino interprets life."*

Nanna says it all when she declares: "The world is in ruins. Everything is going headlong. There is no faith, divine or earthly, no faith among the brides of Christ or those who are supposed to give faith to men; and I prefer my liberty. I am free, but I am loyal; I live with an open face. I sell openly my merchandise, while others pretend and simulate. Not I."

Indeed, remarks Raimondi, Aretino "is a prostitute." He has the prostitute's instinct of social rebellion. "He throws mud not merely in the face of his contemporaries, but of a whole past. It would seem that he lifts up the world and places it against the

light of the sun. . . . All is obscene and libidinous, everything is for sale, everything is false, nothing is sacred. He himself makes merchandise of sacred things to gain money and writes romantic lives of the saints. And then? Like Nanna, like Pippa, he finds it convenient to stand above men and hold them with the reins of their own vices. . . . The discipline which Nanna gives to Pippa is the discipline which guided the life of Aretino."

The Italian critic concludes by remarking that: "Here is a lust, here is an obscenity, unbridled but profoundly human, warm and full, which ought to render these DIALOGUES *preferable to the hypocrisy of so many most grammatic and stupid modern narrators. . . . We well may think that this is a book which should be read by many university professors of literature who have not read it. . . . It is not an insult to our times to reprint a work like the* RAGIONAMENTI, *for there is no work better worth reprinting today. . . . Such is this book; all impetus and vulgarity, poetry and sarcasm; and it 'speaks as life speaks' with its own cruel logic and contradictions. For this reason, the modern Italian literati do not read it." Nor, it might be added, do the literati of any country.*

It is interesting to note that the DIALOGUES *were written at the same time as Aretino's hypocritical and designing religious works. Perhaps, we may be permitted to imagine that they were in some manner an exhaust from that other uncongenial employment. Might not this account for the excess of devilish glee to be found in them? The* DIALOGUES *constituted, Hutton says, the* Feuilletons *of Aretino's journalistic activity. They are vividly documentated, so vividly one is tempted to believe there is some truth in the story about Aretino's having been himself a friar. In any event, these* DIALOGUES, *in addition to having been the models for the obscene works of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, are good reading and good pioneer realism.*

THE LIFE OF NUNS

—and the benediction was in the vulgate.

Here begins the First Day of the Capricious Dialogues of Aretino, in which Nanna, in Rome, under a fig tree, recounts to her little Antonia the Life of Nuns.

THE NOVICE'S FEAST

If you had lovers before, what made a nun of you?

NANNA: Antonia, my dear, nuns, wives and wenches are like a way of the cross. As soon as you have mounted them, you stand a good bit thinking where you are going to put your foot; and it often happens that the demon drags your soul into the worst woe, as he did the blessed soul of my father that day, which made me a nun, although against the will of my mother of sainted memory, whom you may happen to know, or at any rate, what kind of woman she was.

ANTONIA: I knew her as in a dream, and I know (for I have heard tell) that she did miracles behind Benches, and I understand that your father, who was the sheriff's mate, married her as the result of a love affair.

NANNA: Not to be reminded any more of my grief, how Rome was no longer Rome when widowed of so ripe a couple, and to come back home: it was on the first day of May that Mistress Marietta (for that was what my mother was called, although for fun she was commonly known as the beautiful Tina) and Sir Marbieraccio (for that was my father's name), having assembled all our relations, uncles and grandfathers and cousins, male and female, with a flock of friends of both sexes, led me to the church of the monastery, dressed all in silk, girdled with ambergris, with a head-dress of gold, on which was the crown of virginity woven out of flowers, roses and violets, with my perfumed gloves and my velvet slippers; and although I remember by the calendar that it was only a short time ago I entered among

the converted ones, those were pearls that I wore on my neck and clothes that I had on my back.

ANTONIA: They couldn't have been anything else.

NANNA: And so, all dressed up like a young lady, I entered the church, where there were already thousands and thousands of people, who all turned toward me as soon as I appeared, some saying what a fine bride Mr. God was going to have, while some said what a sin it was to make a nun out of so fine a girl, and others blessed me, and others ate me up with their eyes, and others said, "She'll give some of the brothers a good year." But I thought no malice in such words, and I heard certain very bestial sighs, the sound of which I knew well enough, which came from the breast of one of my lovers, who wept all the time the offices were being said.

ANTONIA: If you had lovers before, what made a nun of you?

NANNA: Some silly ones wouldn't have had them, but they have no passion, anyway. And now, I was given a seat up above, among the other women, and after a little, they began singing the mass, and I, as was proper, was on my knees between my mother, Tina, and my aunt, Ciampolina, and a clerk was playing a *laldettal* on the organ; and after the mass, when my nun's clothes, which were on the altar, had been blessed, the priest who had said the Epistle and the one who had said the Gospel raised me up and made me kneel again on the predella of the great altar. Then the one who had said the mass gave me the holy water, and after he had sung with the other priests the *te deum laudamus* and perhaps a hundred verses of the psalms, they divested me of my worldliness and clothed me in the spiritual habit, and the people, stepping on one another's heels, made a noise like that in St. Peter's or St. John's, when some young woman, from madness, desperation or malice, lets herself be put behind walls, as I did once.

ANTONIA: Yes, yes, I can see you, surrounded by that crowd.

NANNA: When the ceremonies were over, and the incense had been given me, with the *benedicamus* and the *oremus* and the *alleluia*, a door opened, making the same creaking sound that the poor boxes do; and then, I was raised to my feet and led to the door, where twenty sisters with the Abbess were waiting for me, and as soon as I saw her, I made her a reverence, and she, kissing me on the forehead, said something, I don't know what, to my father, to my mother and to my relatives, who were all crying as though their hearts would break, and no sooner did the door close than I heard an *oimè* that made everybody start.

ANTONIA: And where did that *oimè* come from?

NANNA: From my poor little lover, who the very next day became a wooden-shoe brother or a hermit in sackcloth, if the truth must be told.

ANTONIA: Poor wretch.

NANNA: And then, as the door closed, which was so quick that it did not even give me time to say good-by to my people, I thought for sure that I was being buried alive in a sepulcher, and I thought I saw dead women in the disciplines and ember weeks; and I no longer wept for my parents, but for myself. And I walked with my eyes fixed on the ground and my heart on what my fate was going to be, until we reached the refectory, where a crowd of sisters came running up to embrace me, and, calling me sister from the start, they made me raise my face a little, and when I saw some clear, fresh, rosy countenances, I was greatly encouraged, and looking about me with more security, I said to myself: Certainly, the devils can't be so ugly as they are painted; and as I stood there, I saw a throng of priests and brothers, with a few seculars mixed in, all quite young, and the most polished and the most merry that I had

ever seen, and as each one took his friend by the hand, they looked like the angels that guide the celestial balls.

ANTONIA: Don't put your mouth in the heavens.

NANNA: They looked like enamoured swains sporting with their nymphs.

ANTONIA: That's a better comparison; go on.

NANNA: And taking them by the hands, they gave them the sweetest little kisses in the world and strove to see who could give the most honied ones.

ANTONIA: And who gave the most sugared ones, in your judgment?

NANNA: The brothers, undoubtedly.

ANTONIA: And for what reason?

NANNA: For the reason set forth in the legend of the whore of Venice.

ANTONIA: And then?

NANNA: And then, each one sat down at one of the nicest tables it seemed to me I had ever seen. In the handsomest place was my lady, the Abbess, with, at her left hand, Master Abbot; behind the Abbess was the Treasuress and, by her side, the Bachelor of Arts; opposite them sat the Sacristan and, beside her, the Master of Novices and a layman and, so on, down to the foot, I don't know how many clerks and as many again brothers. I was seated between the preacher and the confessor of the monastery; and then the victuals came on, and of such sort that, I must say, the Pope himself never had the like to eat. From the first onset, the morsels flew so fast that it appeared the law of Silence, written up where the fathers have their quarters, was being violated by everybody, for tongues and mouths both made the same murmur that silk worms do when they prolong their meal by devouring the leaves of those trees under the shadow of which that poor lad of a Pyramus and that poor lass of a Thisbe—may God

keep them company there, as he kept them company here—used to amuse themselves.

ANTONIA: The leaves of the white mulberry, you mean.

NANNA: Ha, ha, ha.

ANTONIA: What are you laughing at?

NANNA: I am laughing at the thought of a poltroon of a brother, God forgive me. I can see him, as, grinding away with two millstones and his cheeks puffed out like a trumpet-player, he puts his mouth to a flask and swills it down.

ANTONIA: May the Lord choke him.

NANNA: And then, beginning to get their fill, they commenced to chatter, and it seemed to me, in the middle of the meal, like being in the market place of Navona and hearing, on this side and that, the noise of buying and selling which this one and that one makes with this and that Jew; being satisfied now, they proceeded to divide up, each one taking another, until they seemed like swallows billing with swallows. I could not tell you the laughter that arose over the passing of a hind of capon, nor would it be possible to tell you the disputes which sprang up over everything.

ANTONIA: What baseness.

NANNA: I wanted to puke when I saw one sister chew a mouthful of food and convey it with her own mouth to that of her friend.

ANTONIA: The rascals.

NANNA: Then, perceiving that the pleasure of eating had been converted into that distaste which another feels when he has done a certain thing, they began imitating the Germans with their toasts: and the General, taking a great flowing beaker, invited the Abbess to do likewise and lifted it up like a false sacrament; and now, the eyes of all were glittering with too much beer, like the dolls that one sees in a show, and, veiled with wine, like breath on a diamond, they began to shut, and the

crowd, falling sleepily over the food, started making a bed of the table. Or would have done so if, up at the top of the board, had not come a fine lad with a basket in his hand, covered with one of the whitest and gauziest linen cloths that I can remember ever having seen. Was it snow? or frost? or milk? It surpassed in whiteness the moon in mid-month.

ANTONIA: What did he do with the basket, and what was in it?

NANNA: Wait a while. The lad, with a reverence to the Spaniardess from Naples, said: "Greetings to your ladyships;" and then, he added: "A servant of this fine brigade brings you the fruits of the earthly paradise." And uncovering his gift, he placed it on the table, and at once, there was a clap like thunder, as the whole company burst into laughter, just as the little family which has seen the eyes of its father close forever bursts into weeping.

ANTONIA: Which is right and natural; see that you do the same.

NANNA: No sooner were the paradisical fruits visible than the hands of this one and that one began conversing with the thighs, breasts, cheeks and bagpipes of everybody else; and with the same distress with which rogues' fingers converse with the pockets of dunces who allow their purses to be picked, they flung themselves on these fruits as does the crowd on the candles which are flung down from the loggia on Wax-Chandleress' Day.

ANTONIA: What were the fruits, tell me.

NANNA: They were those glass fruits which are made by Murano of Venice, in the likeness of a K, except that they have two little bells which would be an honor to any big cymbal.

ANTONIA: Ah, ha, now I have you by the beak; I've got you.

NANNA: And she was not merely fortunate, but blessed, who came by the thickest and broadest one; and none could keep from kissing her own, as she remarked: "These overcome the temptations of the flesh."

ANTONIA: May the devil not tramp out the seed.

NANNA: I, who played the modest country girl, stealing a few peeps at the fruit, was like a cunning cat which, with its eyes, watches the kitchen-maid and, with its claws, tries to get the meat which she, through carelessness, has left unguarded. And if it had not been that all the company about me had taken a couple and given me one, I, not to appear a weakling, would have taken my own. To make matters short, the Abbess, laughing and jesting, rose to her feet, and every one else did likewise; and the benediction, which she pronounced at table, was in the vulgate.

CONVENT SPORTS

Are these old bones going to sleep alone?

NANNA: We saw the cook had forgotten and left her door half-way open, and so we took a peek and saw her sporting with a Pilgrim, who, having come (I judge) to ask for alms to take him on his way to St. Jacob of Galicia, had gone inside to collect. His slave's frock was spread out on top the cupboard, and his staff, on which was a tablet with a miracle, was leaning against the wall, and his wallet, filled with odds and ends, was giving great sport to a cat, to which the lovers, joyously occupied, paid no heed, while a cask, fallen upside down, was spilling wine over everything. We did not deign to lose any time in so sordid an affair as this but went on to the chink of my lady, the Butleress, who, having given up hope of her Parson's coming, had fallen into such a fury that she was now tying a rope to a crossbeam and, leaping up on a trestle, she fastened the cord about her neck and ventured to kick the support from under her. And she had just opened her mouth to say to the Parson, "I forgive you," when he came to the door, pushed it open and came in and, seeing the light of his life about to be snuffed out, threw himself on her, took her in his arms and said: "What things are these? And so, dear heart, you think I am a faithless one? And where is that divine prudence of yours? Where is it, I ask you?" At these sweet words, she lifted up her head as those who have fainted do when cold water is dashed in their faces, and she became herself again as frozen limbs do in the heat of a fire.

And the Parson, removing the rope and the trestle, placed her on the bed; and she, giving him a kiss, said slowly: "My prayers have been heard, and I want you to place a wax candle for me in front of the image of San Gimignano, with an inscription, saying, 'She prayed to him and was freed'." And by saying this, she had the pious Parson well hooked on the prongs of her fork. Groping our way from these two, who did things out of duty, we came upon the mistress of novices in the act of drawing from under the bed a porter filthier than a mountain of rags; and she said to him, "Come out, my Trojan Hector, my bedroom Orlando, listen to your humble servant, and forgive me for the inconvenience I have caused you, for I had to do it" . . . And the big rascal, raising his breech-straps, replied with a sign from his member, which she, having no manual at hand to decipher his code, proceeded to interpret according to her fancy; and then the big clown, setting about to hunt the hare in the hedge, made her see a thousand glow-worms and bit her lips with his wolf's teeth so charmingly that the tears came to her eyes; whereupon we, not caring to see the strawberry going into the bear's mouth, went away.

ANTONIA: Where did you go?

NANNA: To a crack, where we saw a sister who appeared to be the mother of the discipline, the aunt of the Bible and the mother-in-law of the Old Testament, so far as I could get a good look at her. On her head, she had twenty hairs, like those on a bald wench, all of them full of nits, and perhaps a hundred wrinkles in her forehead; her eyebrows were thick and gray, and her eyes were oozing some yellow stuff.

ANTONIA: You must have had good sight, if you could see even the nits from so far away as that.

NANNA: Wait for me. She was slobbering, and her mouth and nose were snotty, and her jaws were like a bony

comb with two lousy teeth. Her lips were dry and her chin sharp, like the head of a Genoese. From her chin, for ornament, a few hairs sprouted out, like those of a lion, but prickly, I thought, as thorns. Her breasts were like the purse of a man who has no grain and were attached to her bosom by two cords. Her body (mercy on us) all scrupulous, was drawn backward and bent forward. And it's the truth I'm telling you, she had around her a garland of cabbage leaves which looked as though they had stood for a month on the head of a scurvy wretch.

ANTONIA: Just as Saint Nofrio wore a pothouse stave around his shame.

NANNA: So much the better. Her thighs were straws covered with dried parchment, and her knees trembled so that it was all she could do to keep from falling every time she walked. I will leave you to imagine her ankles, her arms, her feet. And I'm telling you, the claws on her hands were as long as the one Roffiano had on his little finger, but hers were full of malice and manure. Then, bending over the earth with a coal, she drew stars, moons, squares, circles, letters and a thousand other thingmajigs; and all the time she was doing this, she kept calling the demons by a hundred names which the devils themselves would not be able to remember. Then, whirling around three times about these contraptions which she had drawn, she leaped sky-high, muttering all the time to herself. Then she took a figure of fresh wax into which a hundred needles had been stuck (if you have ever seen the mandrake, you know what it looked like), and placing this as near the fire as she could stand, she turned it over and over, as gardeners and fig-eaters do, in such a way that it would cook and not burn. And she kept repeating these words:

Fire burn, fire waste
The cruel one who flees in haste.

And whirling it around with more fury than would support a lunatic asylum, she went on:

May this great itching that I feel
Move my god of love to kneel.

And as the image began to get very hot, she muttered, with her face fixed on the ground:

May the Demon be my joy,
Come or die, my pretty boy.

At the end of these verses, some one came beating on the door, out of breath, like one whose feet (when he has done damage in the kitchen) have saved him from a mountain of blows on the back. Then she, putting away quickly the instruments of incantation, opened the door.

ANTONIA: Naked as she was?

NANNA: Naked as she was, and the poor man, exhausted by her necromancy, as if he was famished with hunger, threw his arms around her neck and kissed her, with as much zest as if she had been the Rose and the Rainbow, and praised her beauty, as those do who make sonnets to their Tullias. And the cursed phantom, shaking all over and leaping for joy, said to him, "Are these old bones going to sleep alone?"

STORY OF A BITCH

Which commences with a laugh and ends in weeping.

We heard a brother, a most excellent brigand and a big greasy fellow, telling a fable to I don't know how many sisters and priests and seculars, who, having played at dice and cards all night and ended by becoming tipsy, had come in to gossip and jest with the friar, who was telling them a story, which I am going to tell you, a story which commences with a laugh and ends in weeping, all on account of a big stallion of a hound. Having got audience, the friar began:

Two days ago, as I was passing through the square, I stopped to watch a little bitch in heat, with two dozen whelps at her heels, attracted by the odor of her droppings, which were as round and rosy as burnt coral. They ran along smelling her all the way, now this one and now that one, and this silly sight had collected a great troop of lads, who were watching her as she would leap, now over this one, dropping a couple of handfuls, and now over this other, dropping a couple more. I, at the sight of such sport as this, had just put on a proper friar's face, when there suddenly appeared on the scene a dog from a hayrick who seemed to be the lieutenant of all the butchers in the world, and seizing one of the other dogs, he threw him to the earth, furiously, and then, leaving him, downed another, nor did he leave a whole skin on their backs. At this, some of them flew this way and some that, and the big dog, arching up his back, ruffling his hair as a pig does its bristles, squinting his eyes, gnashing his teeth, snarling and foaming at the mouth, stood looking at the unlucky little bitch. After sniffing the pretty thing for a moment, he gave her two shoves which made her howl like

a big dog, but she slipped out from under him and ran away. And the whelps, which had been standing guard, taking after her, the big one followed in a rage. The little one, spying a crack in a closed door, suddenly leaped inside, and the whelps with her. Whereupon, the poltroon of a hound squatted down outside, for the truth is, he was so stupid he did not see where the others had gone, and so, he stayed there, biting at the door, pawing the earth and howling like a lion with the fever. After he had been there a good bit, one of the poor things came out, and the treacherous hound, seizing it, took off an ear, and when a second one appeared, he did worse to it. One by one, he punished them as they came forth and made them clear the country as villains clear at the coming of the soldiery. Finally, the young bitch came out, and seizing her by the windpipe, he fixed his teeth in her throat, while the lads and the people who had gathered for this dog festival were sent scattering, and cries went up to heaven.

Here ends the First Day
of the
Capricious Dialogues of Aretino.

THE LIFE OF MARRIED WOMEN

She, having a wish to joust with the lances of the night—

The Second Day of the Capricious Dialogues of Aretino, in which Nanna recounts to Antonia the Life of Married Women.

THE HERMIT

And they even made a sermon about her.

NANNA: There was a matron of forty years who in our town had the reputation of great wealth. She came of most worthy family and was the wife of a doctor who did miracles with his learning, which he got out of great books. Now, this one that I am telling you about always went dressed in gray, and the morning that she had not heard five or six masses, she did not rest that day. She was a string of ave-marias, a claw-saint and a whipchurch, and she always fasted on Fridays for all the masses, except in March, and at the mass she would make the responses like a clerk, singing the vespers as the brothers do; and it was said that she even went so far as to wear an iron girdle about her carnal parts.

ANTONIA: For that I blame Santa Verdiana.

NANNA: This one performed a hundred times more abstinences than she, and she wore nothing but clogs, and on the eve of the feast of San Francesco de la Vernia and that of the Resurrected she would eat only so much bread as you could hold in your fist, drinking nothing but a little pure water, and she would remain till the middle of the night in prayer, and what little she slept was on a bed of nettles.

ANTONIA: Without a nightgown?

NANNA: I cannot tell you. Now, it happened that a certain hermit was doing cut-throat penances in a retreat about a mile, or perhaps two, from the town, and he would come among us every day begging some little thing by which to live, and he never returned to his hermitage empty-handed, for the sackcloth that covered him, that

skinny face of his, the beard that reached to his girdle, his tangled mane of hair and the rock which he always carried in his hand, in accordance with the practice of St. Jerome, moved the whole community to piety. To this venerable hermit, the doctor's wife, whose husband was prospering by the ills of many in the city, turned her attention, and she did him great charity. She often went to his hermitage, certainly a devout spot and a delightful one, and from it she would bring back a few sour pickles in the belief that she was tasting sweet ones.

ANTONIA: What sort of place was the hermitage?

NANNA: It stood on a little mountain of rising ground, and it bore the name of Calvary. In the center stood a cross with three big wooden spikes, which greatly frightened the common wenches, and this cross had on its neck a crown of thorns and on each arm two hanging lashes made of knotted cord, and at the bottom was a death's head, and on one side, fastened into the earth, was a sponge above a reed, and on the other side a piece of iron in the form of a rusty javelin, on the top of which was an old partisan's pike. Where the mountain sloped downward was a little garden, around which rose-bushes made a low wall, with a postern gate made of the interwoven withes of briny shrubs; this gate had a wooden key of its own, and in the whole plot one would not have been able to find a single stone, so clean did the Hermit keep the place. The squares of the garden were separated by pretty little paths, and they were full of various herbs, on this side crisp lettuces and saltworts, on the other side fresh greens and tender, and some young garlic such as the whole compass could not raise or bear, some of the finest cabbages in the world, cap-mint, mint, anet, sweet marjoram; and the parsley, too, had its place in the little garden, in the middle of which an almond tree, one of those large ones without beards, cast its shade. Through a few little

rivulets flowed clear water, which, issuing from a vein among the sprightly stones at the foot of the mountain, gushed forth among the greenery; and all the time that the Hermit stole for his devotions, they spent in nourishing the little garden. Not far away stood the chapel with its steeple and two small bells, and leaning against the wall of the chapel stood the hut where the Hermit took his repose. Into this little paradise came the doctor's wife, as I have told you, and to keep the body from being envious of the soul, this pair one fine day, having retired into the hut on account of the sun, which gave them great discomfort, proceeded, I do not know how, to work their evil ends; and as they did so, a villager (their biting tongues are the worst of all), in looking for his ass' he-colt which had wandered from its mother, and passing (quite by accident) the hut, saw the holy couple joined together; running back to the town, he signaled the people with a few strokes on the bell, and the populace hearing him, the most of them abandoned their tasks and gathered at the church, no fewer women among them than men; and there they found the villager, who told the priest how the Hermit was working miracles. Whereupon the priest, putting on his holy frock, with the stole about his neck and the book in his hand, and with no less than fifty persons following him, arrived in the midst of a *credo* at the hut, where they found these two heavenly slaves, the man-servant and the maid-servant, sleeping like ditch diggers. The Hermit, snoring, held his whip to the back of the devoted lady who loved the rope; whereupon the crowd, at first view, remained silent, as a good woman does when she sees a horse and a mare, and then they broke into a laugh at seeing their ladies come to such as this, and the laugh woke the two dormice. They roused from their sleep. As they did so, the priest, seeing them joined together, cried out in a thunderous voice: *Et*

incarnatus est.

ANTONIA: I would not have believed you could go one better to the whorishness of nuns, but I see I was wrong. But tell me, the Hermit and that old Hypocrite, didn't they die?

NANNA: Die? He drew his file out of the socket, rose to his feet and, giving a couple of pulls at the twined bryony that served him as a girdle, said: "Gentlemen, read the lives of the Holy Fathers, and then condemn me to the flames, or whatever seems good to you. The devil, in my person, has sinned, and not the body, for it would be treason to do harm to it." And now, do you want me to tell you what happened? The big rogue, who had been a soldier, an assassin and a ruffian and, out of desperation, had become a hermit, babbled so much that, as he stood before me, I, who know where the devil keeps his tail, and the priest, who had been advised by hearing the confession of the gentle lady, we each believed him; for I will swear by that bryony girdle of his that the spirits that tempt hermits are called *succumbli*[1] and *incumbui*.[1] And this half-nun, who, all the while the sackcloth Hermit was snipping away, had time to be thinking up mischief, now began to writhe, puff out her throat and choke, roll her eyes, howl and beat herself in a manner that was frightful to see, whereupon the Hermit said: "Behold, the evil spirit is upon the wretched one;" and when the mayor of the town wanted to take her, she commenced to bite and scream terribly. Finally, ten villagers led her to the church, and there they made her touch the two knuckle-bones which are said to be those of the holy innocents, and which are kept in a rude tabernacle of boughs and adored as relics; and when she had touched these for the third time, she became herself once more. And this ends the story of the doctor's wife, who remained the little saint of the city, and they even made a sermon about her.

[1]Nanna's Malapropisms

THE LADY WHO WALKED IN HER SLEEP

My Husband, it is this cursed nature of mine.

NANNA: A very rich old man, and a very miserable old ass, had a wife of seventeen years, who was the finest little piece of flesh that I think I ever saw, with a grace so gracious that whatever she said and whatever she did was full of gentleness, and her little gestures were so lady-like and her manners were so lofty and all her little actions were so charming that they would have thrown any one into spasms of love; place a lute in her hand, and you would have sworn that she was the mistress of sweet sound; give her a sword, and she was a lady-captain; to see her dance, she was a young deer, and to hear her sing, she was a little angel, and what a wonder it was to see her sporting about simply cannot be told. Her bright little eyes, filled with I do not know what fire, aroused a feeling of love in every one, and when she ate, it seemed that she was gilding her food, and when she drank, it was as though she were giving savour to the wine; she was so sharp in her movements, and so generous, and always spoke with so much majesty and wisdom that the duchess, by comparison, would have appeared a very pish-posh. And she would dress herself out in clothes, made in certain fashions of her own, which were the object of much regard. Sometimes, she was to be seen with her hair in a coif, sometimes with it done in a braid on the top of her head, with a little bang, which, dangling over one eye, made her blink; and thus did God with one stroke slay men with love and the women with envy. Her own native manners

taught her all too well how to make slaves of her lovers, who were lost utterly when they beheld the trembling of her bosom, over which nature had sprinkled drops of vermilion-hued roses. She would often put out her hand in front of her, as if she desired to find some fault with it, and by so doing, she would bring about a comparison between the lustre of her rings and that of her own eyes, all of which tended to dazzle the sight of the one who was ogling most intently the hand which she pretended to be regarding; she scarcely seemed to touch earth when she walked, but danced along with her eyes; and when she would take the holy water and sprinkle it over her head, she would genuflect with such a reverence that it seemed it must be the way they did it in paradise. And with all her prettinesses and all her virtues and all her graces, her father, of course, the big ox, had had to go and marry her to an old man of sixty—at least, being unwilling that any one should call him old, he confessed to sixty.

This husband of hers was called the Count, from some worthless old castle or other with two chimneys and a crumbling moat, and by virtue of certain silly old volumes, heavy with sheepskin, which had been given him, so folks said, by the emperor. Oh, he was able to lord it over the field with those young snipes who liked to fill their hide full of holes, and who came there almost every month to tourney. You would have said that he was the *potta da Modona* to see the way these young loafers, who had come to make fools of themselves in one way or another, doffed their hats to him. And on the day of the joustings, he would show himself in truly pontifical garb, clad in an old-fashioned coat of mail with gilded egrets, and with a wealth of violet-colored velvet above and below —not the peely kind, for velvet like that never peels—with a trencher's cap on his head and with a cape that was a veritable

rose-garden, lined in green, with a collar of brocaded silver, like those which scholars used to wear on certain of their cloaks, while in his hand was a sword, very sharp, with a hilt in brass and the whole in an antique scabbard. He would first give a couple of turns up and down the stockade on foot, with a score of barefoot followers, armed with crossbows and bailiff's gear, at his heels, a part of them being his own servants, the rest having been borrowed for the occasion. And then, he would mount a speckled mare that could not have been made to take a hurdle by a hundred pricks of the spur, much less one, and which gave out entirely just as the tourney was beginning. On these days, he always kept his wife under lock and key; on other days, a watch-dog of a gardener sniffed her tail to the church, to the *feste* and everywhere she went. And afterwards, in bed, he would tell her of the deeds of valor he had done when he was a soldier, and when he came to tell her of the battle in which he was made a prisoner, he would imitate the bombardment for her with his mouth, throwing himself all over the bed like a madman. She, poor child, having a wish to joust with the lances of the night, was on the verge of despair; and so, sometimes, she would make him get down on the floor on all fours and, fixing a girdle in his mouth in the manner of a bridle, she would leap on his back, digging her heels into his sides and treating him the same way he treated his horse. And then, being in so melancholy a way of life, she thought up a gallant piece of malice.

ANTONIA: I should like to know what it was.

NANNA: She began talking in her sleep at night, speaking in disconnected words, which at first caused the old dotard to cackle loudly, but when she came to double up her little fist and give him a swat in the eye, so that he had to poultice it with oil of rose-water, he reproved her for it greatly. But she pretended not to remember

what she had done or said, and in addition, she began leaving her bed, opening windows and trunks, and sometimes, she even went so far as to dress herself, whereupon the old fool would run after her, shaking all over and calling after her in a loud voice; and on one occasion it happened that, in his efforts to follow her out the door of a room, setting foot to the top of a stair which he thought led to the ground, he fell all the way down and broke himself all over, fracturing a leg and raising such an uproar that the family, on hearing his cries, which had aroused the neighborhood, came running to him and picked him up—though it would have served him right, if he had never got up. And she, pretending she had been awakened by her husband's cries, on hearing what had happened, fell to weeping and grieved greatly, cursing the vice of sleepwalking; and night as it was, she straightway sent for the doctor to put the bones back in place.

ANTONIA: What was her object in pretending to be dreaming?

NANNA: Just to get him to fall, as he did fall, so that, breaking his bones, he wouldn't be able to follow her. And at this, the big baby, in his jealousy, was more miserable than ever, but so vain, with his broken heart, that he had ten big strapping grooms lodged in a large hall on the ground floor. The oldest of them was not more than twenty-four, and a misfit lot they were: the one that had a good cap had socks full of holes, and the one that had good socks had a worse doublet, and the one with a good doublet had a disastrous cloak, and the one with a good cloak had a ragged shirt; and they lived on bread and capers.

ANTONIA: Why did the rogues put up with it?

NANNA: Because of the liberty he gave them. And now, Antonia dear, this lady of ours had given a look at this company; and since she had the old blockhead safe in

bed, with his thigh between a pair of splints, she resumed her dreaming, and, throwing her arms about and crying always "O la! O la!," she would jump out of bed and, opening the door, she would leave him to strangle with calling for her. And then, she would go to the grooms who, around a lamp that was always about to sputter out, were gambling away a few farthings which they had stolen from their master in the purchase of trifles. Giving them goodnight, she would put out the light, and drawing upon her the first that came to hand, she would commence to sport with him, and in three hours which she spent with them, she would try them all ten, twice for each one; and returning up above, freed of the humors which had caused her to go rambling about, she would say: "My husband, it is this cursed nature of mine which, like a witch, forces me to go prowling about the house all night."

THE PRISONER

Let us set up our tabernacle here.

NANNA: And now, we come to a lady who was taken with a great desire for a prisoner. The Mayor, not caring to hang himself, had nothing to do but give this fine fellow to the gallows. This latter, in his twentieth year, upon the death of his father, had been left heir to fourteen thousand ducats, half in cash and the rest in possessions, including the furnishings of what was really a palace, rather than a house. And in the course of three years, he had eaten, gambled and bawdied away all his *denarii* and, disposing of his farms, in three years more he had done away with the rest. Not being able to sell one of his houses, because his father's will forbade it, he had torn it down and sold the stones; and then, he started doing away with the furniture, now pawning a sheet, now selling a table-cloth and, finally, first one bed and then the other. It was one thing today and tomorrow something else, until he was on the verge of ruin; and then, having thrown away his house for nothing, he was left without a coat to his back. And so, he had given himself to all the crimes which a man not merely might commit, but might imagine: to perjury, homicide, larceny, robbery, cards and false dice:[1] to treasons, deceits, knaveries and assassinations. He had been in various prisons, for four and five years at a time, and in these he had had more rope than dinners. He had ended up, if I am to tell you the truth, by spitting in the face of a certain good Master.

[1] *dadi falsissimi.*

ANTONIA: The ribald traitor.

NANNA: He was so ribald that being conceived by his mother was the least of the sins he ever committed. And being a beggar so far as everything else was concerned, he was as rich as could be in syphilis; indeed, he had enough to share with a thousand of his fellows, and he still would have had a world of it left for himself. While this cut-throat was in prison, a doctor, hired by the community to care for the poor prisoners, while treating the leg of one who was eaten up with cancer, remarked: "I have cured nature, against all the rules of nature, in that fellow there, and don't you think I shall be able to cure your leg?" The fame of this unnatural specimen came to the ears of the lady I was telling you of, and when she heard of this wicked wretch who was lying there in prison, she burned more than, so 'tis said, did the Queen for the bull; and as there was no manner or means by which she could carry out her fantasy, she thought of committing a crime, so she might be placed in the same prison with this spit-on-the-cross. And so, when Easter time came, she went to communion without confessing herself, and being taken in the act, she insisted she had done no wrong. When the thing had come for judgment to the mayor, he caused her to be taken and bound with a cord; and then, she confessed that the cause of her fall had been the unbridled desire she had for the root of that fellow, whose eyes were so turned into his head and so small he could scarcely see out of them, while his nose was large and flattened into his face, with a deep trench across it, with two of Job's boils so big they looked like slipper-buckles. He was ragged, stinking, filthy and all covered with lice of every sort. And to this fellow, the Mayor wisely gave the wench, saying: "Let him be the penance for your sin *per infinita seculorum*." But she, upon being confined for life, was as joyful as one who

had just gained his liberty. And 'tis said that she said, as she made proof of that big roasting-ear: "Let us set up our tabernacle here."

ANTONIA: How big was that roasting ear that you are telling me about? Was it as big as that of a young ass?

NANNA: Bigger.

ANTONIA: And then, what happened?

NANNA: While she was contented in the jail, the land became greatly annoyed with the Mayor, so that the latter was forced, loving justice, to condemn to the gallows the aforesaid malefactor; and having given him his ten days time . . . The lust-filled wench had no sooner gone to prison than the news, spreading through the city, created much talk among the populace, the artisans and, above all, the ladies. Nothing else was to be heard in the streets, at the windows or on the terraces but hilarious gossipings and smutty jokes about her; and wherever six of these gossips could gather about a pillar of holy water, they would stand there for two hours chattering. Among the other groups, there was one in my neighborhood, and there was also a certain respectable country woman who, as soon as she had heard it, seeing the crowd hanging from a rock to listen, said: "Since we are women, an act of ribaldry like this is an insult to us all. We ought to go right away to the palace and drag her out of the prison with fire, and ride her on a cart and tear her with redhot pincers. We ought to stone her, flay her alive and crucify her." And with these words, all puffed up like a toad, she went her way home, as though all the honor of the world rested on her shoulders.

ANTONIA: What a beast.

NANNA: Now when the ten days time had been given the wretch, this wouldn't-spit-in-church that I am telling you of heard about it—she who wanted to run to the prison and drag the other one out with fire. And now

she, smitten with sudden compassion, began to think to herself what a great loss the land was going to suffer in losing its big cannon, the fame of which alone, to say nothing of the experience, drew the poorly satisfied as a lodestone does a needle or a straw. And then it was, she fell into a frenzy to enjoy it—the old spurn-sacrament, speaking with all reverence—and so it was, she came to think up the most devilishly subtle piece of malice that was ever heard of.

ANTONIA: What was it she thought of, if God will forgive you for speaking of such things?

NANNA: Well, she had an infirm husband at home, who was out of bed for two hours at a time and flat on his back for two days; and sometimes, he had such constrictions of the heart that it seemed he would pass away in a fit of choking. And then it was, she heard that one of those sweep-brothels (may the devil take them) might save one who was going to justice by meeting him on his way to the gallows and saying: "This is my husband."

ANTONIA: Why, I never heard of such a thing.

NANNA: And so, she came to think of putting her husband out of the way and then, with the authority of the law, taking the condemned wretch for a spouse. And while she was thinking of this, her poor unfortunate husband, crying "*Oimè, oimè,*" closing his eyes, clenching his fist and doubling up his legs, was about to pass on; whereupon she, who was like a cart of tunney fish, being wider than she was long, put a cushion on his mouth and sat upon it; and with no other assistance, she caused his soul to go to the place where the holy bread comes from.

ANTONIA: Oh, oh, oh.

NANNA: And then, raising a great hue and cry, and tearing her hair, she roused all the neighbors who, knowing the indisposition of the poor man, did not doubt that

he had choked to death in one of his fits. Having buried him honorably enough, for she was decently rich, this mad old bitch, it's the truth I'm telling you, straightway betook herself to a brothel. Having, neither on her own side nor her husband's, any relative that was worth two *denarii*, there was no one to hinder her; and she gave folks to believe that she had been driven to madness by the death of her husband. And while she was there, the morning came of the day on which justice was to be done, and the land was emptied of men, and of women as well, and all assembled in the house of the Mayor to hear sentence of death pronounced on the one who had merited a thousand deaths. But the latter merely laughed, when he heard the *Cavaliere* saying: "It is pleasing to God and to his magnificence, the Mayor . . . what have you to say before you die?" And taken out of the prison and led into the public place, with his feet in stocks and his hands manacled, he was brought to a pile of straw, where he stood between two comforters, making no gruff face at all at the painted Bible which they handed him to kiss. As if it was no affair of his whatever, he babbled of a thousand foolish things, and every one who came up to him he called by name. When morning had passed, the great bell of the Commune, tolling slowly, slow, gave the signal for the justice that was to be done; and when the ecclesiastical standards had been brought out, and the sentence of condemnation had been read, which lasted till evening, the malefactor with the most resounding voice came down the way with a rope about his neck and a tinsel crown upon his head, signifying that he was the King of Ribaldries. And to the sound of the trumpet, in the middle of a throng of bailiffs, with the whole populace at his heels, the condemned man passed the crowded benches and the roofs and windows, filled with women and children.

And so they came to the place where the she-wolf stood, waiting with beating heart to throw herself on the neck of the big glutton, with the same madness with which one ridden with fever hurls himself on a pail of fresh water. Without any mistake, she made her way furiously to the front, forcing an opening through the crowd with her loud cries, tearing her hair and beating her palms. And throwing herself on him, she said: "I am your wife." Seeing that justice had been prevented, the crowd stepped all over one another's heels and raised such an uproar that it seemed all the bells in the world, by a single stroke, were calling to fire, to arms, to a sermon and to a feast day. When the news reached the Mayor, he was forced to maintain the laws of the region; and the traitor, having been saved, was led away to hang himself on the forks of the wicked old dame.

ANTONIA: Surely we're coming to the end of the world.

NANNA: Ha, ha, ha!

ANTONIA: What are you laughing at?

NANNA: At the thought of that other, who became a Lutheran from living in prison all by herself. For she remained there, with three daggers in her heart. One was at seeing her lover led away, the second at believing him hanged, and the third came with hearing that her castle, her city and her state had been possessed by another.

ANTONIA: May God do good to God, who punished her with those three daggers.

Here ends the Second Day
of the
Capricious Dialogues of Aretino.

THE LIFE OF COURTEZANS

That is what her shop has to sell.

The Third Day of the Capricious Dialogues of Aretino, in which Nanna recounts to Antonia the Life of Prostitutes.

THE LIAR

And in the morning, he gave me a dress of glorious old satin.

NANNA: I had a certain lover, a merchant and a good fellow, who not only loved me but adored me and supported me; and I certainly showed him a good time, not being at all crazy over him.[1] And one day, I told him that some courtezan or other was dead over such and such a one, which was not the truth, for we courtezans are merely the victims of caprices which seize upon us occasionally and make us want to eat a great handful; but these caprices last only as long as the sun of spring or the rain of summer, and it is impossible that she who submits herself to everyone should love anyone.

ANTONIA: That I know well enough.

NANNA: Now this merchant I am telling you about was sleeping by my side one night, when I, to give myself a reputation in his eyes, and to cook his goose,[2] decided to make him right gallantly jealous, although he made a profession of not being so. And how will you do it, Nanna? I said to myself. I decided to buy a couple of starlings and a pheasant, and I hired a ragged fellow who was not known to my lover to come beating on my door at dinner time, knowing the merchant would be eating with me at that time; and having told my maid to open the door, lo, up he came with a "health to your Ladyship," adding: "I am the messenger of the ambassador of Spain, who begs that your Ladyship will deign to eat these little love trifles, and that when it is convenient to you you will deign to give my master five and

[1] *Ed io certissimamente lo accarezzava, non essendo guasta di lui.*
[2] *cuocerlo a fatto.*

twenty words." I rebuffed him, saying: "Ambassador or no ambassador, take them away, for I do not care to have any ambassador speak to me except this one, who is better to me than I deserve." And when I had kissed the old simpleton and turned threateningly on the ragamuffin, who took his departure, the merchant said to me: "Take them, you silly girl; take everything you can get." And saying to the ragged fellow, "She does not want any love of yours," after a few laughs, which did not sound just right, he remained quite beside himself, and I, going up to him and shaking him, said: "What are you thinking of? Not the emperor, much less his ambassador, shall have so much as a kiss from me, and I think more of the soles of your shoes than I do of a thousand thousand ducats." Whereupon he, sufficiently reassured, went about his business.

In the meanwhile, I arranged that this ragged-breeches of mine should come at four o'clock, for it was at four o'clock that we were in the habit of dining together; and I found a ragged ribald wretch, with a piece of torch in his hand and his breeches bunged up behind, whom I caused to beat at my door, and from below he called up to me in most Spanish fashion, saying: "Signora, the Signor Ambassador has come to do his reverence to your Highness." And I replied to him: "The ambassador will have to pardon me, because I am under obligations to this ambassador, whom you see here." And as I said this, I placed my hand on the shoulder of my man.[1] The ragged lad turned away, stood for a moment and turned back; and when I would not open the door to him, we heard him saying: "If you do not open, my Lord will come and tear the door down." At this I went to the window and said: "Your Lord may slay me and burn me and ruin me at his pleasure, but I love only one, who by his grace,

[1]The "*Mon homme*" theme was popular then as now.

has made me what I am; for him, at need, I would die." At this, behold, the Pharisees at the door, who were five or six in number, but who seemed to be a thousand, cried out, and one of them, with an imperial voice, said to me: "You skinny whore, you will be sorry for this, and that wet hen who scratches your back, I swear *a dios*, we'll kill him." "You may do what you will," I replied, "but it is no act of a Lord to try to force a poor woman." And when I wanted to say more, my own ninny pulled me by the cloak. "Don't say any more, if you do not want to be cut to pieces by those Spaniards." And drawing me inside, he showed me, in return for that esteem which I had showed I had for him, more graces than prisoners give to the *Rioni* who take them out of prison for the feast of mid-August; and in the morning, he gave me a dress of glorious old satin; and I should not have had so much as an *ave maria* out of him, if I had asked him for a kingdom, so fearful was he of those Spaniards, doubting not that the Ambassador would carve an X on his face; and on every occasion he would remark: "I tell you, this woman of mine is well-treated by those ambassador chaps."[1]

[1]Cf. "How He Lied to Her Husband."

THE CRAFTY CUSTOMER

You gave him a dose of his own medicine there.

NANNA: I used to sleep often with a certain shake-crest, who, when I would say to him, look out for such and such a wench, would say: "Who, I? Who, me? When I was in the guard at Sienna, at Genoa, and at Piacenza, I learned a few things. The whores don't get my money, no, by God." And while he was making this boast, I would take the ten *scudi* which he had in his purse, and I might have taken them in the night and left chunks of coal in place of them without his knowing the difference. One day he was all occupied with the beating of his heart, which I had caused by telling him that I had fallen in love with another, and seeing him standing there like that, I went up to him and putting my hands in his beard and giving it a couple of cute little pulls, I said to him: "Who's your girl?" And saying this, I took a seat on his neck and, spreading out my knees and kissing his face, I forced myself to cry, *ei si sia*, and then, falling silent with a sigh, which was like a wind, it was so great, I embraced him and caressed him so well that he was soon quite himself again. And even while I was saying to him, "I wish we could sleep together tonight," there came a great knocking at the door from one who came on purpose, and when my maid went to the window, she called up to me: "Signora it is the Master." "Let him come up," I replied. And he, coming up, asked me for ten *scudi* which he needed for a bed curtain, and he told me, moreover, to be as

quick as possible about it; whereupon, I said to the maid: "Take this key, and from those *scudi* which are in the chest, give him his ten." She went over to open it, leaving me to smooth out the tail of this big tom-cat, who was standing on his sharpness as a practical man; and as I stood there, bewitching him—indeed, I had bewitched him already—the Master called to me, and I, having told her a number of times, hearing the beast of a maid growling, got up and went over to her. I found her busy with the chest, which could not be opened, for the reason that, just as the Master who had come for his *denarii* was no paragon, so the key was not the right one for the lock; and making a face to imply that she had broken it, I leaped upon her with great cries and beat her; then demanding that the chest be broken open, we were not able to find anything to break it open with. Whereupon I turned to the crafty one and said to him: "By your grace, if you have ten *scudi*, give them to me, and I will break this chest open right away and pay you back."

ANTONIA: You gave him a dose of his own medicine there, ha, ha, ha!

NANNA: He put his hand into his purse and tossing them out said: "Take them, master, and go, for God's sake." And when I kicked the lock as though I wished to break it open, he said: "Send for a locksmith and have it opened, for there is no hurry." And he gave me a "thou," as though I, all of a sudden, had become one of his servants on account of the aid he had given me.

ANTONIA: The big tightwad.

NANNA: Leaving him to cool his heels I threw myself into bed with the intention of not giving him a billfull that night, and as soon as he had taken me in his arms, there came a loud pounding at the door, which I had been expecting, to annoy him. I rose up, although he tried to draw me back, begging me not to go see who it

was beating at the door; and while he was eaten up with jealousy, I looked down and saw that it was a little Monsignor with a cap thrown back over his cloak and sitting astride a mule. He called up to me, offering me his crupper. I accepted it, and taking the cloak from his groom, since the lad had other clothes beneath it (the ones he always wore), I went with him. And then this business agent of whores as well as of men, tearing down out of spite a portrait of mine which was on the wall of my room, took his departure like a gambler from a swindle shop, perceiving he has got the worst of it. But I forgot to tell you, he broke open the chest to get his money, but my maid ran crying through the street and a great crowd gathered, and he was compelled to flee, undressed as he was. As for the chest which he forced, he found there only a few unguents and ointments which I was keeping against certain evils to come.

THE LOVER OF HER HEART

They have made a comedy out of my simplicity.

NANNA: There came to Rome a young man of twenty-two years, noble and rich, a merchant and of good name, a proper pasturage for whores; and no sooner had he come than I laid hands on him, pretending to be truly in love with him, and the more he minded his own business, the less I minded mine. I commenced to send my maid to him four or six times a day, praying that he would deign to come to me, until it came to be generally believed that I was all minced chicken and holy oil over him.[1] And so it was, everybody was soon saying, "The whore has met her match this time; she's met one who will make the milk stink in her mouth, and who can make her crazy simply by staying with her for an hour." And I let it be thought that I was becoming skin and bones for him, pretending that I could not eat or sleep, talking always of him and always sending for him, until they even laid bets that I would go to the tomb, dying for the love of his beautiful eyes. The young fellow, getting out of it a few good nights and a few good dinners, went about boasting, showing everyone a turquoise of small value which I had given him; and when he was with me, I would always say to him, "Never let yourself lack for anything for want of *denarii*, and never go to anyone but me, for all I have is yours, just as I myself am yours." For this reason, he went strutting among the Benches, letting everyone see the ring on his finger; and it happened that when

[1] *che io ero al pollo pesto, ed a l'olio santo per lui.*

he was with me one day, there came to see me a great old lord, and I hid the young man in a neighboring room and locked him in. The lord came up and, sitting down, his eye caught sight of some linen sheet or other. "Who soils that?" he said. "Your Ganymede? Or Canymede, I don't exactly remember which." And I replied; "It is certainly he who soils it, and I love him and adore him; I look upon him as a god, and I am his servant and shall be for eternity, making love to you others only for the sake of your money." You may imagine how puffed-up the young chap was when he heard this; and as soon as the other was gone, I ran to let him out, and when he came out, his neck was too big for his shirt, and strutting up and down, he lorded it, with haughty looks, over me and the servants and my house. But to come to the amen of my paternoster, one day, when he wanted to throw me across a chest in his usual manner, I left him and went out with another. He, being used to jokes like this, and used to adjusting his cloak to the wind, did not run after me, expecting that I would send for him as I usually did; but when he did not see the dove of peace appear, the very devil laid hold of him. When he came to my door, he was told, "The Signora has company"; whereupon he stood there like a fly in oil, with his chin on his chest, with a wry mouth, with lips drawn and melting eyes, his hat askew and his heart beating pitty-pat, his legs trembling like those of one who has just gotten up from a sick bed. And I, seeing that, under the plasters of jealousy, he was about to have a chill, laughed at him; and when someone greeted him, he replied only with a little raise of the head. When he came back that evening, I let him in, and then returned to gossip with a large company which I had. Seeing that I did not ask him to be seated, he took the liberty of seating himself, and taking up his post in a corner, without enjoying all

the pleasant things which were to be heard, he stayed till everyone had gone, and then, alone with me, he said: "Is this your love? Are these your caresses? Are these the protests you used to make?" I replied: "My brother (by your leave), I have become the talk of the courtezans of Rome, and they have made a comedy out of my simplicity, and what cooks me more than anything is that my old lovers no longer want to give me anything, saying, 'We don't want to buy the bone while someone else eats the oiled bread.' And in case you want me to be the girl that I was, and that I have been to you, there is one thing you can do." At these words he raised his head as one does who is about to escape justice, swearing that for love of me he would give his eyes to the fleas. I had but to open my mouth and ask. And then, I said to him: "I wish to get a bed of silk, which costs, with the fringe, with the satin and the bedstead, without the cost of making, in the neighborhood of a hundred and ninety-nine ducats; and since my friends see that you have more than enough, and since you have promised to give me what I wanted, get it all on credit, and when the time comes to pay, leave that to me; I will see that they are paid or split." But he said: "I cannot do this, because my father in his letters has let it be understood that I am not to have any more credit, and that whoever gives me anything must do so at his own risk." At this, I turned my back on him and showed him out of the house. One mid-day when he was with me, I said: "Go find Solomon, who will provide you with the *denarii* on a writ of hand." He went, and when Solomon said to him, "I cannot lend them to you without security," he returned to me and told me the whole thing, and then I told him: "Go to such and such a one who will give you jewels for the said sum, which the Jew will be gracious enough to take." So off he went, and having found the one with

the jewels, he gave him his note for two months, and carrying the jewels to Solomon, he sold them to him and brought me the money.

ANTONIA: What did you have to say to that?

NANNA: The jewels were my own, and when he had got his *denarii* back, the Jew brought them back to me; and after eight days, I sent for the one who had given the jewels on the writ of hand and said: "Have the young man thrown into prison and swear that he is a suspected fugitive." This order being carried out, the simpleton was taken, and before he got out, he had paid double for his meals, for those old hosts are not in the habit of giving free meals to a sponger.

THE STORY OF TWO CATS

I'd wager my soul against a pistachio nut.

NANNA: And now we come to the one about the cats.

ANTONIA: What cats might those be?

NANNA: I had a debt of twenty-five ducats which I owed to a certain cloth vender, and having no thought of ever paying them, I was looking for a way of giving him the birdie.[1] What did I do? I had two cats that were pretty enough, and when I saw him coming to my window for the *denarii*, I said to my maid: "Give me one of the cats and you take the other, and as soon as the old weaver gets here, I'll cry out, and then I want you to pretend to choke it, and I will do the same with the one I have in my hand." I had no sooner said this than there he was.

ANTONIA: Didn't he knock at the door first?

NANNA: No, for he found it open. As soon as he came up, I began to cry, "Choke it! Choke it!" and my maid, almost weeping, fell to begging me to pardon them, promising that they would not eat the dinner any more; and I, who had the appearance of a mad woman, placing my hands at the throat of my cat, said to it: "You'll never do it again." My creditor, seeing the cats, at once felt pity for them and begged me to give them to him for a present. "Hardly," I said. "By your grace, Signora, let me keep them for eight days, and then I will help you kill them, in case you do not want to give them to me or to pardon them." And saying this, he took the cat, while I made a show of resistance,

[1]Exactly: *uccellarlo*.

and taking the other from the hand of the maid, he gave them to the shop boy who followed him (having first put them into a sack) and caused them to be taken to his house. "Be sure you bring them back to me after eight days," I told him, "for I want to kill the traitors." He promised to do so, and then asked me for the twenty-five ducats, which I, on the sacrament, promised to bring to his shop within the next ten days; and so I sent him away content. When the ten days were passed, and even fifteen, he came back to ask me for them. Holding them in a handkerchief and jingling them all the time, I said: "Very willingly, but first I want my cats." "What do you mean, your cats?" he replied. "They fled away over the roofs as soon as I let them out of the house." When I heard this, which I knew all the time, putting on the face of a step-mother, I said to him: "See that my cats are brought back to me; if you don't, they will cost you more than twenty-five scurvy ducats. Those cats are promised, and are to be taken to Barbary. My cats, Mister, must be brought back here; they must be brought back here!" The poor man, leaning against the window, hearing the cries that I raised and seeing a crowd of persons gathering in the street, without saying anything more, ran down the stairs, saying: "The devil take you and all whores."

ANTONIA: Nanna, I want to tell you a fancy I have.

NANNA: Tell it to me.

ANTONIA: This pretty story about the cats is such a gentle one that for love of it you shall be pardoned for four of those excommunications of yours.

NANNA: Do you believe it?

ANTONIA: I'd wager my soul against a pistachio nut.

THE BEST PROFESSION

As I understand it, the vices of whores are virtues.

NANNA: Oh, oh, oh, but I've got a bad cold; oh, oh, oh, this fig-bush of mine certainly hasn't known how to keep the sun. This is no time to tell you of the many men I wheedled out of fate, making them believe that the Synagogue of the Jews was in the air, after the manner, so it is said, of the *arca di Macometto*. Oh, oh, I can't breathe, I'm hoarse already, this cold makes my uvula drop.

ANTONIA: It's the walnut, not the fig-tree, that casts a sorrowful shade.

NANNA: I want you to give me your advice in three words, as you promised—I'm choking. Oh, oh, oh, I'm sick. I feel worse about not being able to tell you how I reformed my lovers than if I had lost I don't know what. Pretending charity toward their purses, I never let them spend their money on embroidered clothes, fine dinners, or useless things. And I did this because their *denarii* would better serve my own appetites, and the clowns thanked me for my discretion and for being so considerate of their pocketbooks. *Oimè*, I'm splitting, oh, oh, oh; I'm pained also at not being able to tell you that one about the espaliers, who pawned them, who had them in pawn, who bought them for me, of the two who were present when they were bought, of the one who brought them home for me, and of the one who was in distress while they were being set up in the house.

ANTONIA: Go on, force yourself to tell me. Go on, please, Nanna, sweet Nanna, dear Nanna.

NANNA: It happened that Master—help me say it—Master, Master—I'm dying, this is no place, pardon me if I tell you some other time —that one, too, about the Monsignor who fled naked over all the roofs in the street—*Oimè*, I'm in a fit, Anto—, Antonia mine—kerchoo!

ANTONIA: A curse on your cold, and on that gentle creature of a sun who has spoiled your conversation. Perhaps I ought not to tell you, but it was hardly to be believed you should have seen such things as you did on the very first day you entered among the nuns and that you made yourself so at home with the bachelor at the very start.

NANNA: I tell you, I became a Sister when I was still half a girl. And as to my having seen such foolish things all at once, you may believe me, I have seen far, far worse —damn this cough—kerchoo!

ANTONIA: Yes.

NANNA: Yes, yes. But give me your advice in three words, as you promised.

ANTONIA: To come back to the promise which I made you, that I would sum the matter up for you in three words, I cannot keep that promise.

NANNA: Why? Eh, eh—kerchoo!

ANTONIA: Because it was a thing which I could do at the time I told you I would do it, but not now; for we women are wise when we act without thinking and mad when we stop to think. But I will give you my advice, and you may take the rose and leave the thorn.

NANNA: Tell me.

ANTONIA: I will say that, having made an allowance for a part of all you have told me, I believe the rest, for there is always a little falsehood mixed with the truth, and

sometimes, to make our conversation prettier, we tinsel it out with gewgaws. . . .

NANNA: When did you ever catch me in a lie?

ANTONIA: Not in a lie, but in a little neglect in your conversation, and I am inclined to believe, moreover, that you have it in for the nuns and the married women; though I must give you the credit of saying that there are a good deal worse ones among them than there ought to be. As for whores, I take no account of them.

NANNA: I can't answer you, and I'm afraid this cough is going to become a catarrh. Be gracious enough to hurry and give me your advice.

ANTONIA: My advice is that you should make your Pippa a whore, for the nun betrays the sacrament, and the married woman assassinates the sanctity of matrimony; but the whore attacks neither the monastic life nor the husband; she is like a soldier, who is paid for doing wrong, and doing it, she is not to be held for so doing, because that is what her shop has to sell, that is what she has to sell. On the day when a landlord opens a tavern without putting up a sign, it is understood that one goes there to drink, to eat, to gamble, to bawdy, to curse, and to deceive, and that he goes away to say his prayers or to fast. But in the place itself you will not find any altar or days of Lent. The gardeners sell their vegetables and druggists their drugs, and the brothels sell blasphemies, lies, gossipings, scandals, dishonesty, thefts, filth, hatred, cruelty, death, syphilis, treasons, ill-fame and poverty. But the confessor is like the doctor, who can more readily cure a disease that shows in the palm of the hand than one which does not. And so I would advise you to make your Pippa a prostitute at the first flight,[1] since any pentitent lady, with a couple of drops of holy water, can wash away all whorishness from her soul. As I understand it,

[1] *di primo volo:* "right off the bat."

from what you have told me, the vices of whores are virtues. Beyond this, it is a fine thing to be called Signora, even by Signori, eating and dressing always like a signora, holding a continual feast and marriage day, as you yourself, who have told me so much of them, know better than I do. The important thing is, that she should not form a whim for anyone, since Rome always was and always will be—I will not say the city of whores, for there is no need of my confessing that.

Here ends the First Part
of the
Capricious Dialogues of Pietro Aretino.

THE ART OF THE COURTEZAN

It is not enough to have pretty eyes and blonde hair.

The Second Part of the Capricious Dialogues of Aretino, in which Nanna, on the first day, teaches her daughter, Pippa, how to become a whore and on the second, recounts to her the manner in which men betray the wretched women who trust in them; while on the third day, Nanna and Pippa, seated in a garden, listen to a Godmother and a Nurse conversing on the art of the procuress.

THE VOCATION

I'll be one yet.

NANNA: What wrath, what anger, what madness, what restlessness, what heart-flutterings and fainting fits are these, fastidious girl that you are?

PIPPA: I am angry because you do not want to make me a courtezan, as my godmother, Nonna Antonia, advised you.

NANNA: It is time for dinner now.

PIPPA: You're a step-mother, ugh!

NANNA: Cry on, little baby.

PIPPA: I'll be one yet.

NANNA: Lay aside that pride of yours, lay it aside, I tell you, for if you do not change your ways, Pippa, if you do not change them, you will never have a diaper to your rump; for today there are so many whores that the one who does not work miracles with her wits will never have a dinner to go with her afternoon lunch; and it is not enough to be a fine piece of flesh, to have pretty eyes and blonde hair; art or fate is far more important; the rest is bubbles.

PIPPA: So you say.

NANNA: And so it is, Pippa, but if you lean on my bosom, if you open your ears to my precepts, you will be very, very, very well off.

PIPPA: If you will hasten to make me a signora, I will open them soon enough.

NANNA: If you will listen to me instead of playing with every straw that blows, with your head full of whims, as it used to be when I tried to teach you something

useful, I swear to you by these paternosters I am always chewing over that, within fifteen days at the longest, I will take the matter in hand.

PIPPA: May God grant it, mamma!

NANNA: May you will it, rather.

PIPPA: I do will it, dear mammina, *mammina d'oro.*

THE A B C'S

For they deceive the poor courtezans.

NANNA: The art of entertaining your friends with a certain manner of gossiping, which never comes to the point of hatred, is the lemon squeezed into the frying-pan and the pepper sprinkled over the contents of the pan. It is a gentle novelty, when you find yourself at cross-roads with different generations, to satisfy them all with a little babbling, which never becomes boresome, and which is useful in filling in the pauses when someone comes in to see you. And since the customs of others are of more importance than individual fantasies, study, spy out, anticipate, consider, be attentive to, subtly analyze and sift the brains of all. Here you have a Spaniard, dandified, odoriferous, dirty. And if the Our Highnesses which he hurls upon your head and the kisses with which he sugars your hand were a form of alchemy, between them and his ceremonious manners you would have the income of an Agostino Chigi.[1]

PIPPA: I know well enough that there's nothing to be got from them.

NANNA: You have nothing else to do but to provide smoke for their wind and breath for those belly-ripping sighs which they know so well to give; bow then to their bows, kissing not merely the hand but the glove, and if you do not want to be paid in the coin of Milan, get rid of them the best way you can.

PIPPA: I shall do so.

NANNA: Be firm. As for a Frenchman, open to him right away, open in a flash; and while he is embracing you as

[1]The Croesus of Rome, Aretino's patron.

gaily as possible and kissing you in a careless fashion, cause the wine to be brought out, for with this nation it is necessary to step out of the nature of prostitutes, who ordinarily would not give you a beaker of water if they saw you were dying; and then, with a couple of slices of bread, set yourself to make a domestic sort of love. And without standing too much on the conveniences, take him as your bed-fellow, chasing away all the others with a pretty manner. In the meanwhile, it will appear that you are about to hold a carnival, so much stuff will have rained down in the kitchen; and if he gets out of your claws with a shirt to his back, he is lucky, for these butlers, who know better how to lose than how to gain, and who more readily forget themselves than remember an injury which has been done them, give no heed at all whether you rob them or not.

PIPPA: The French are all right; blessed be the French.

NANNA: But remember, they give *denarii* and the Spaniards cups. The Germans now are of another stamp, and with them it is necessary to be upon your guard. I speak of the merchants, who fall into love, I will not say as they do into wine, because I have known some who were most polished, but, let us say, as they do into Lutheranisms. They will give you great ducats, if you know how to approach them, never permitting them to be your lovers nor to make or talk love. Skin in secret those who allow themselves to be skinned.

PIPPA: That is a good thing to remember.

NANNA: Their nature is hard, bitter, and bestial, and when they get a thing into their heads, God alone can take it out; and so, grease them as gently as you know how.

PIPPA: What else would there be for me to do?

NANNA: There is one thing I should like to warn you about, and yet I do not dare to do it.

PIPPA: What?

NANNA: Nothing.

PIPPA: Tell me, I want to know.

NANNA: I do not want to tell you, because I should be blamed for it, and it would be a sin.

PIPPA: Then why did you give me a fancy for hearing it?

NANNA: I will tell you one thing, that if you have a chance to mingle with Jews, you should do so, but with dexterity, finding as an excuse a desire to purchase espaliers, bed-furnishings, and similar trifles; and you will see there will be some of them who will take you to the bank, advance you all their usuries and all their pilferings, throwing in even their discounts; and if they stink like dogs, let them stink.

PIPPA: I thought you really had something to tell me.

NANNA: So I had. The odor with which they reek put me in mind to tell you. But do you know what? Sailors with all their fine gains are always in danger of the galleys, of chains, of drowning, of falling into the hands of the Turks or of Barbarossa, of shipwreck, of eating dry or vermin-infested bread, of drinking vinegar and water, and of all the other discomforts which I have heard tell there are; and if the one who goes to sea takes no thought of winds or rains or any hardships whatsoever in order to dispatch his cargo, surely a courtezan ought to make light of the smell of a few Jews.

PIPPA: You make the most beautiful comparisons. But if I associate with them, what will my friends say?

NANNA: What would you have them say, if they know nothing about it?

PIPPA: How do you mean, nothing?

NANNA: If you say nothing about it to them, the Jew, since his bones are not marked, will be as silent as a thief.

PIPPA: In that way, it's all right.

NANNA: I can see a Florentine coming to your room with his chitter-chatter. Make love to him, for the Florentines outside of Florence are like those persons who, with a

full bladder, are unwilling to go urinate out of respect for the place in which they find themselves, but when they get outside, they deluge a wide, wide space. I will tell you that they are more generous abroad than they are at home; beyond this, they are virtuous, gentle, polished, sharp and pungent; and if they give you nothing else than their gallant words, do you not think you could be content with those?

PIPPA: Not I.

NANNA: That was merely a method of speaking on my part; they must spend as much as possible, give papal dinners and *feste* in quite a different manner from what the others do; and then, their tongue is pleasing to all.

PIPPA: And now let's speak a little of the Venetians.

NANNA: I do not want to tell you about them, for if my words are not equal to their merits, I shall be told that I am deceived in the love I have for them[1] and certainly I am not deceived at all, for they are gods, and the patrons of everything, and the finest youths, the finest men and the finest old men that there are in the world; all the rest of the world will appear to you like wax-work soldiers by comparison, and although they are proud, having a right to be, they are the very image of kindness itself. And while they live the life of merchants, in accordance with our custom, they do it on a royal scale, and he who is on the right side of them is fortunate. Everything else is a joke, saving the grace of those old money bags who have piles and piles of ducats and who, no matter how much it thunders or rains, would not give you so much as a *bagattino*.

PIPPA: God keep them.

NANNA: He does it well enough. . . . And now to jump from Florence to Sienna. I will tell you that the Sienese madmen are gentle fools, although for a number of years

[1] Aretino never loses a chance to eulogize his own loved Venice.

they have been turned wicked, according to the chatter of some; and according to the experience I have had of men, the odds appear to me to be that they hold, in the matter of gentleness and virtue, to the Florentine, but they are not so crafty nor so dog-like, and he who knows how to deceive can flay and shear them alive. Moreover, they are big fellows down below, and their practices are pleasing and honorable.

PIPPA: They will do for me.

NANNA: Yes, certainly. And now let's on to Naples.

PIPPA: Don't talk to me of that town; it gives me the asthma to think of it.

NANNA: Listen, Signora, even though it be a death in life. The Neapolitans are made to drive away sleep and to provide you with a fine bellyful some day of the month when you have the whim in your head, alone or in the company of someone else, it does not matter whom. I can tell you that their fripperies rise to heaven: talk of horses—they have the first that came from Spain—of clothing—two or three wardrobes full—money in piles, and all the belles of the kingdom are dying for them directly; and if you drop your handkerchief or your glove, they will recover it for you with the most gallant parables that were ever heard in a Capuan chair, *si, Signora.*

PIPPA: What sport.

NANNA: I once wanted to get rid of a certain traitor by the name of Giovanni Agnesi, the very scum of all filth, if I am to force myself to counterfeit him in words, although the hangman could not counterfeit him in deeds; and at the sight of this, a certain Genoese burst into laughter, whereupon I turned on him and said: "My proud Genoa, proud because you know how to buy beef without bones, we others can teach you a thing or two." And it was true, because they are the subtlest of

the subtle and the sharpest of the sharp, and they are altogether too good managers and cut the thing just as it should be cut and they will give you not the least bit too much. For the rest, I cannot tell you what glorious lovers they make, what gentle Neapolitan and un-Spanish breeding they show, reverent, making what little they give you appear as sweet as sugar, and never failing to give you that little. You must always know how to get the better of them and measure your gifts as they measure theirs; and, without turning your stomach, with a pleasant speech in your throat, with your nose and with a sigh, take things as they come.

PIPPA: The Bergamasks have more grace than their speech.

NANNA: They also are gentle and dear, that is certain. But now, let us come to the Romanians. Daughter, if you delight in eating bread and buffalo cheese with sword points and spear heads for a salad, pickled in the fine bravados which their great-grandfathers used to hurl at the town sheriffs, associate with them. The short of it is, on the day of the Sack,[1] they defecated upon us (speaking with all reverence), and Pope Clement has no regard for them any more.

PIPPA: Don't forget Bologna, if for no other reason than for love of the count and of the *cavalier* who is of our house.

NANNA: Forget them, ah? What would the rooms of whores be without the shadow of those long-winded stocks? Born here solely for the purpose of making numbers and shade, says the *canzona;* I am speaking of love and not of arms, said Friar Mariano. A fine young chicken of twenty years told me that she had never seen madmen who were plumper or better clad. And so, do you, Pippa, make a feast for them as you would for courtiers, and take your pleasure in their thoughtless and foolish

[1]Of Rome.

conversation; and such a practice as this is by no means without its use, and it will be more useful than any other, if they delight as much in she-goats as they do in kids. As for the rest of the Lombardians, who are snails and great dandies, treat them in the whorish manner, taking from them what you can get, giving to each of them a "*cavalier*," throwing in a "*Count*" for a moustache, with a "*Signor, si*" and a "*Signor, no*"; for such deceits as these do not spoil the soup, and it is honest to indulge in them and even to boast of them; for they deceive the poor courtezans, and moreover, those houses in which such customs are to be found are praised above all others.

THE SCAR

And those were the denarii I spent on this house.

NANNA: A certain official who in the course of his duties had taken two thousand ducats from the port of entry was enamored of me, and so foolishly that it atoned for all his sins. This fellow was in the habit of spending by the moon, and anyone who wanted to get anything out of him, when he was not in the mood to give it, had to do some astrologizing. And what is more to the point, his bizarre nature started the day he came into the world, and whenever a word was spoken that was not to his liking, he would fall into a fury, and his hand would hunt his dagger, and a slash in the face was the least you had to fear with him. For this reason, the courtezans fled his company as countrymen do the rain. I, who had taken this old sock to new-foot, was in the habit of keeping him company at every meal, and although he played his asinine jokes on me, I waited patiently, thinking I would play one on him which would make up for everything. I thought and thought until I found the way, and what do you think it was I did? I took a certain painter into my confidence, by name Maestro Andrea, or I will say it was that anyway; and I made an agreement with him that he was to be in waiting and hidden under my bed, with his colors and brushes, to paint a scar on my face when the time came. And then, I received Maestro Mercurio (bless his memory), if you remember him.

PIPPA: I remember him.

NANNA: And I told him that, when I should send for him on such and such an evening, he was to come with oakum and eggs; and he, to be of service to me, did not leave his house on that particular feast day when I wanted to do this. And now, look you, Maestro Andrea is under the bed and Maestro Mercurio in his house, and I am with this official at table; and when we had just about finished dinner, I reminded him of a certain chamberlain of his Reverence, to whom he did not even want me to speak, and whom he had driven out of the house. Now it did not take much raising for a wind that was already up, and calling me a prostitute, a low woman and a *bandiera*, he was hoping that I would ram the lie down his throat; and he gave me a blow on my cheek with his dagger, a blow that I could feel, and then I, who had at hand some oil of lacquer which had been given me by Maestro Andrea, dipped my hands in it and smeared my face, and with the most terrible cries that a woman ever gave I made him believe that he really had succeeded in cutting me. Thereupon, as frightened as one who had murdered another, he took to his legs and fled to the palace of Cardinal Colonna, and locking himself in the room of a courtier who was his friend, he kept moaning to himself: "Alas, I have lost my Nanna, Rome and my offices." I, in the meanwhile, locked myself in my room, alone with my elderly servant maid, and Maestro Andrea, coming out of his nest, in a trice painted a scar across my right cheek, which was so real that when I looked in the mirror I trembled with fear. At this Maestro Mercurio came in, saying: "There seems to be something wrong here." And having assisted the drying of the colors by applying oakum with oil of rose water and the white of an egg, he bandaged up the wound right gracefully, and then going out into the hall where a crowd had collected, he said: "She is not able to come out." And so the report spread throughout

Rome, and the rumor came to the would-be murderer, who wept like a child that is beaten.

Morning came, and with it the doctor, and with a great farthing candle lighted in his hand he applied the cure, until I do not know how many persons who had stuck their heads through the door of the room and who had filled all the windows, began weeping at the sight, and I cannot tell you how many of them, unused to looking on so cruel a wound, fainted dead away. And so the rumor became public that my face was spoiled forever, and the evil-doer began sending money, medicines and doctors, seeking thus to avoid the sheriff. When eight days had passed, I let it be known that I had escaped, but with a mark more bitter than death to a courtezan; and my friend, wishing to quiet the thing with his *scudi*, kept sending this and that; and I so employed my friends and patrons that it came to be understood I was only to be seen by a certain shell-bean of a Monsignor, who acted as go-between. In short, five hundred ducats were disbursed for my injury, and fifty more for doctor and medicines; and then I pardoned him, that is, I promised not to prosecute him before the governor, desiring from him only peace and security. And those were the *denarii* which I spent on this house, not counting the garden, which I have added since.

PIPPA: You were a good man, mamma, to do such a thing as that.

NANNA: But we have not yet come to the halleluia, and I should not come to an end in a year if I wanted to tell you everything; for in good faith, I have not squandered the time that I have lived, my faith no, I have not squandered it.

PIPPA: I knew that to begin with.

NANNA: And then, finding that the five hundred, with the fifty ducats, had merely touched my palate, I thought up most whorishly a piece of whorish malice, and what do

you think it was? I sent for a certain Neapolitan, a swindler of the swindlers, with the reputation of possessing a secret by which he could remove every sign of a scar which had been left on the face.[1] He came to me and said: "When a hundred *scudi* have been deposited I will make your face appear as smooth as this." And he showed me the palm of his hand. I began writhing and said, with a feigned sigh: "Go and tell that miracle to the one who is the cause of my being the way I am." When he wanted to say more, I turned upon him, calling "Tom cat! Tom cat!" The swindler, with his all too fine clothes, took his departure, went to the official and laid before him an account of what he proposed to do. And now, would you believe it, the crucified wretch, despairing of ever having anything more to enjoy, deposited the hundred. But what use to prolong this story? The scar which was not there went away with a little holy water which I sprinkled on my face six times, with a few words which appeared to be saying a *mirabilium*, but which really said nothing. And so it was, the hundred pleasures, as the Greek says, came into my hand.

PIPPA: Welcome and a good year.

NANNA: But wait. When the rumor spread that I had been left without a trace in the world, everyone who had a scar under his moustache came running to the swindler's rooms as the synagogues would run about the Messiah, if he were suddenly to appear in the Jewish *piazza*. The traitor, filling his purse with earnest-money, packed up and left, trusting to the discretion he thought I ought to show as a reward for the ducats which he had put me in the way of gaining.

PIPPA: The official, did he hear and believe this?

NANNA: He heard it, and he did not hear it; he believed it, and he did not believe it.

[1]Plastic surgery!

PIPPA: That's enough.

NANNA: But the poison is in the tail.

PIPPA: What, is there more to come?

NANNA: The best part is to come. The big booby, after so many disbursements, for the sake of which, it is said, he sold a knighthood, was finally reconciled with me through the offices of go-betweens and by means of letters. These ambassadors kept telling me about his passion, and he came, himself, to throw himself at my feet, seeking the words that would put him back in my good graces. So I went with him to the shop of the painter, who had painted a tablet for me with a miracle, which I told him he should carry in person to Loreto. When he fixed his eyes on it, he saw himself depicted there with a dagger in his hand and about to slash me, a poor woman. This was nothing to what he read beneath it: "I, Signora Nanna, adoring Messer Maco, thanks to the devil which entered his cup, had from him as a reward for my adoration this wound of which that Madonna to whom I hang up this votive offering has cured me."

PIPPA: Ha, ha!

NANNA: When he read this, he made a face like those which bishops make on reading their epitaphs, under the heels of the demons who flay them when they are excommunicated. Returning home all off his hinges, by means of a new dress he made me promise to take his name off the tablet.

PIPPA: Ha, ha, ha!

NANNA: The conclusion is this: The fine fellow gave me, besides, the *denarii* to go there, where I had no intention of going; and there was no need for me to go, for I forced him to get me an absolution from the Pope.

PIPPA: Is it possible he was so senseless that when he came to you he did not see your face had never had a scar?

NANNA: I will tell you, Pippa, I took something or other,

like the back of a knife, and fastened it to my face; I kept it there all night, and as soon as he appeared, I removed it. And then, for a while, you would have believed, seeing the livid spot it left, that it was the same sort of scar you see about a bit of bruised flesh, such as would have been left by a knife-wound that had healed.

PIPPA: I see.

A NEW RUSE

Tell me if it isn't a joke for whores to know how to keep themselves.

NANNA: I want to tell you that one about the crane, and then I shall finish the business I have with you.

PIPPA: Tell it first.

NANNA: I pretended that I wanted a crane to eat with vermicelli, and not being able to buy any, one of my lovers was forced to go out and kill one with his rifle, and so I had it. But what do you think I did with it? I took it to a delicatessen keeper, who knew all my subjects, or vassals, as Gianmaria the Jew called those of Verucchio. But I forgot to tell you, I made him who gave it to me swear to say nothing about it, and when he asked me what the difference was, I replied that I did not want to be taken for a glutton.

PIPPA: You did right. And now to the delicatessen keeper.

NANNA: I gave him to understand that he was not to sell it except to someone who bought it for me. And he, who had served me in such matters on other occasions, understood me at once. No sooner had he hung it up in his shop than one of those who knew my fancy was upon his back, saying, "How much do you want for it?" "It is not for sale," replied the knave, in order to make him want it the more, "and besides, it costs too much." The other swore an oath, saying, "Let it cost what it will." He ended by taking out a ducat and sending the bird to my house by his groom, thinking I would believe that it had been given to him by a Cardinal. I, making sport, sent it back, cut up as it was, to be sold again. What then? The crane was

bought by all my friends, and always for a ducat, and finally it came to my house. And now, Pippa, tell me if it isn't a joke for whores to know how to keep themselves.

PIPPA: I am astonished.

Here ends the First Day
of the
Pleasing Dialogues of M. Pietro Aretino.

THE BETRAYALS OF MEN

Treacherous men, lying men, false men—

The Second Day of the Pleasing Dialogues of Aretino, in which Nanna recounts to Pippa the manner in which men betray the wretched women who trust in them.

THE SACK OF ROME[1]

The people who, to gain ten ducats, were destroyed.

NANNA: A certain Romanian baron, not a Roman, who had escaped through a hole, like a rat, from the sack of Rome, having taken to ship, was cast up with many of his company on the shores of a certain great city, the mistress of which was a Signora, whose name I am not able to tell you. She went down to see the poor man who had been tossed up on the land and who was drenched, broken, pale as death and disheveled, more like the image of fear than the courts of today are like that of knavery. Treacherous men, lying men, false men—these were the burden of his tale. Her Ladyship was intoxicated with the speech and the gallantry of her guest, until it seemed to her that she only lived while listening to his charming conversation. And then they commenced to speak of Popes and of Cardinals. At this, she begged him please to tell her in what manner priestly astuteness had come to fall into the claws of the evil ones. Thereupon the baron, desirous of obeying the commands of his fair suppliant, giving vent to one of those highwayman sighs which come from the liver of a prostitute who sees an empty purse, said: "Since your Highness, Signora, wishes me to remember what makes me hate my memory, I will tell you how the empress of the world became the servant of the Spaniards, and I will also tell you all the wretched sights I saw. But what boor, what German, what Jew could be so cruel as to tell these things to another without bursting into tears?" And then he added: "Signora,

[1]A famous description.

it is the hour for sleep, and the stars are already scattering;[1] but if it is your will to know our misfortunes, although I am merely renewing my griefs, I shall begin to tell them." Saying this he began speaking of the people who, to gain ten ducats, were destroyed. Then he spoke of the news which Rome heard, of the German foot-soldiers and the oaths they swore, who had come with flying banners to make her the *coda mundi.*

"Thereupon everyone said to another: 'Gather up your things and fly.' And certainly everyone would have looked upon it as magic if that traitorous band had not come with an '*a pena de le forche.*"[2] He told how, after this news, the debased people devoted themselves to hiding their money and all things of value. He told of the little groups and circles of men, gathered here and there, speaking of that which caused their fear and talking of what it seemed to them was likely to happen. "In the meanwhile, the wards and boroughs and the paths that joined them began swarming with a file of foot-soldiers; and surely, if valor had been a matter of fine coats, of fine stockings or of gilded swords, the Spaniards and the Germans would have been out of luck." Then the baron told how a hermit ran crying through the streets. "Do penance, priests; do penance, thieves, and ask mercy of God, for the hour of your punishment is at hand; it is here; it has sounded."

But their pride had no ears, and by this time the Scribes and the Pharisees were appearing at the cross of *Montemari;* and when the sun struck their arms, the bestial light made the blackbirds tremble on the wall more than thunderbolts would have done. It had now come to such a point that no one any longer thought of

[1]Cf. Aeneas and Dido:

Et iam nox umida caelo
Praecipitat, suadentque cadentia sidera somnos.

[2]Pain of the gallows, pain of death.

resistance, but was only looking for some place to hide himself. At this point an uproar arose on the *Monte di Santo Spirito*, and our fine fellows in the *piazza* put up at first a gallant resistance. The enemy having gained I do not know how many weather vanes brought them to the *palazzo* with a '*viva, viva*!' which deafened heaven and earth; and while it appeared that they had won the day, behold, the bars of the *Monte* were broken and, having made a slaughtering of many who had no fault of war, the enemy ran on to the *Borgo*. Then a few of them passed over the *ponte* and went on to the *Banchi*, but soon came back; and it was said that the good *Castello* had not bombarded them for two reasons, one because it would have been a pity to throw away balls and powder; the other because they did not wish to make the enemy angrier than they were; and so they merely waited to let down ropes, lowering the old coach-boys to sacred ground. And then night came, the *Ponte Sisto* was fortified and from the *Trastevere* an army swept over Rome. What cries were heard then; gates crashed to the ground, everyone fled, everyone hid himself, everyone wailed. Blood bathed the streets, massacre was everywhere, tortured ones shrieked, prisoners prayed, women tore their hair, old men trembled, the city was topsy-turvy, and he was happy who died at once or who, in his agony, found someone to dispatch him. But who can tell all the evils of such a night as that? Friars, monks, chaplains and other rabble, armed or disarmed, hid themselves in the sepulchres, more dead than alive, nor was there a hole or a cave or a well or a bell tower or a wine cellar or a secret place anywhere that was not suddenly filled with all sorts of persons. Respectable men were mocked and, with their clothes torn off their backs, were searched and spit upon. There was no church, no hospital, no house nor any other place that was

respected; and even into those places where men do not enter, they entered, and out of spite they chased the women into those places where any woman is excommunicated for going. But the pity was to see the fire in the loggias and in the painted palaces; the pity was to hear husbands, red with the blood which streamed from their wounds, calling for their lost wives in a voice that would have made the solid block of marble in the Coliseum weep."

The baron told the Signora this which I have told you, and she wanted to weep when she heard of the Pope in the *Castello*, cursing those who had broken the faith; and she shed such tears that she almost choked and, unable to utter any more words, she remained as one mute.

THE THIRTY AND ONE

A fine one, but not for the one that it's about.

NANNA: And now I'm going to tell you a fine one, but not, as it turned out, for the one that it's about. There was, on the other side of the *Popolo*, a certain lady—a female, I rather should say—of goodly size, goodly looks, as sweet as possible; and if ever a whore might be said to be good-natured, it was she. Pleasant and entertaining in her ways, she laughed and jested with all, with that very pleasing grace which was hers from the cradle. This one was invited to a dinner in a vineyard, and those who invited her did not have to urge her much, because she was always ready for a good time, and they seemed to her good fellows enough. They took her there—it was a two hours' trip—on the crupper of a mule; and arrived at the vineyard, they found a fine dinner awaiting them: young kids, milk-fed calves, beef, partridges, tarts, ragoûts, and every pleasing kind of fruit; but it turned out to be an unfortunate dinner for the too fervent lady.

PIPPA: Did they cut her to pieces?

NANNA: Not to pieces, but in quarters, in the manner that you shall hear. The first stroke of the *ave maria* had barely sounded when she asked permission of her hosts to go back and sleep with him who kept her. The drunken, foolish and wicked fellows replied to her with cruel jests: "Signora, tonight you are under obligations to us and to our brother-grooms of the stable; you may as well make up your mind to stay here, for there are thirty other young birds coming.

For your sake, they shall be called the arch-thirty, since there is between us and them the same difference that there is between Bishops and Archbishops; and if you are not treated according to your deserts, you will have to excuse us and blame it on the place." And then, one of them began singing:

With the little widow who sleeps alone
I should like to pick a bone.

The poor girl, betrayed by her own kindness and the malice of others, when she heard this, was like one who, on the wooded mountain of Fiascone, just before the dawn of day, strikes his shoulder against the breast of some hanged man. She was so overcome with grief that she was not able to speak a word. In the meanwhile, the big pig dragged her to the trunk of an almond tree and, bending her head down there, drew her clothes above her head and did what seemed best to him, thanking her for the service with two cruel and resounding slaps on the rump. This was a signal for the second one who, treating her in his own good fashion, took a great pleasure in the points of jagged wood which pricked her behind; when she attempted to push him away, he, in completing his pleasure, bent her head down monkey-fashion; and the screams she gave were the signal for the third tilter, but the sport he took was gentle by comparison. It was the very death to her to see a throng of overgrown grooms, under-cooks and hostlers, coming out of the *casa* of the vineyard with the same uproar which starved dogs make when they are released from the chain and turned loose on a full meal, or the Friars when they see their soup. . . .

PIPPA: I am amazed.

NANNA: When morning came, there were hisses, cries and kicks and more of an uproar than countrymen cause when they catch sight of a fox or a wolf. And then she,

beside herself, with the sweetest and most pitiful words that were ever heard, begged them to let her be. With her inflamed eyes, her pulpous cheeks, her rumpled hair, her dry lips and her torn clothes, she was like one of those unfortunate Sisters abandoned by their *Babbo* and their *Mamma* in the path of the Germans, when the latter came to Rome.

PIPPA: I have great pity for all such.

NANNA: The end was even worse than the beginning. They sent her home at the hour of the *Banchi*, on the back of a pack horse, like one of those saddle mares that bear hucksters to the grain market. She never recovered from the shame she had and, feeling that she had lost fortune and reputation, she was no longer herself but died of grief and want.

MONNA QUINIMINA

In which she heard more praise than at the laudamus.

NANNA: A certain Monna Quinimina, an unlikely bit of flesh, to whom Nature had given a little figure and very little face, was breaking her neck to be literary, and this proved her undoing. Like one who knows only enough about gambling to lose, she knew only enough about letters to understand one sent her by some loafer or other. Oh my Lord, where the devil does Cupid keep himself, who snares us all in the dark; and how is it possible that a little dung-dropper like him should be able to draw a bow and wound hearts? Yet he is to blame for those pestilential tumors which come to us women when we believe his beeswax. He makes us believe that we have eyes like the sun, hair of gold, cheeks of cochineal, lips like rubies, teeth like pearls, a serene air, a divine mouth and an angelic tongue; and we women let ourselves be blinded by the letters he sends us, just as that foolish female was I am telling you about. She, to set the crowd to talking about the fact that she knew how to read, would steal every minute she could and plant herself at the window, book in hand. It was here that a certain jackdaw of a rhymester saw her and conceived the idea that it would be good sport to get up some idle contraption to deceive her. And so, taking a piece of paper and dipping it in the juice of red violets, and dipping his pen in fig-milk, he wrote to her how desperate he was over her beauty, which was like that of the angels. He went on to tell her that gold took lustre from her hair and Spring its

flowers from her cheeks, making her more than believe that milk got its whiteness from being washed in her bosom and her hands. Now you may imagine whether she was vainglorious or not, hearing herself praised in this fashion.

PIPPA: The silly girl.

NANNA: When she had finished reading this letter, which was to be her undoing, in which she heard more praise than is to be heard at the *laudamus*, she became a bigger softy than ever; and when urged for a reply, she threw herself into the deceiver's arms, directing him to come the day after next, for at that time her husband would be going to the country and she would be in waiting.

PIPPA: She had a husband, then?

NANNA: Yes, unfortunately.

PIPPA: Unfortunate for him.

NANNA: Now this fellow had found some sonnet-maker or other, some spoil-paper, some rhyme-stretcher, and had said to him: "I want to serenade a certain little married lady, with whom I expect to have sport very soon, and so that she won't know the difference, here is my own hand-writing." He showed the other a few lines written by himself, and after they had laughed over it for a while, they took a lute and, in a jiffy, they had strung together some silly thing which was crude enough. Then, with an "ah, ah" for the benefit of the lady, he took up his place under the window of her bedroom (for she lived in a suburb where some one passed only once in a year). Leaning against the wall and striking a pose with his instrument, he turned his face upward and, while she leaned over from above, repeated the following:

For all the gold of all the world,
Lady, I would not tell a lie,
Even in praising you to the sky.

By God, I would not say your mouth
Smells like India or the perfumed South,
Or that your hair, when all is told,
Is finer than the finest gold;
Your eyes may be the Inns of Love,
But they are not the Sun above;
Your lips and teeth, I'd hardly say,
Were pearls or rubies by the light of day;
And the charming costumes that you wear
Will never drive me to despair.
You are a pretty little thing,
Though I wouldn't say a lady;
Your ways are very promising;
They'd lure a Hermit maybe.
In short, you're not divine, I fear,
Since you don't pass orange water dear.

PIPPA: I would have thrown the mortar on his head; I would, for a fact.

NANNA: She was not so rude as that, as you would not have been, either. She took it all as very fine and grand and could scarcely wait for her husband to leave the next day before she fled with this fellow to the house of a baker, a friend of the whippersnapper in question. There, she gave him for safekeeping one of those ornaments which women wear around their waists. When the young jackanapes saw it, he at once said to himself: "This bit of ambergris will make a fine bracelet for my arm, while these gold nuggets will fill my purse." Saying this, he went to the mint and transformed the uncoined into coined metal. Seven and thirty ducats he had for his pater nosters, for that was what the ambergris brought; and these he at once proceeded to gamble away, returning to the baker's house in one of those rages which take those who find themselves in the hole on account of an ace. Thereupon, he took that little bunch of *petrosello* (or parsley, as the wise

Sibyls call it) who had tried to be an hepatica and gave her a good beating with his cane; in fact, he almost broke her bones. And then, with a certain precision of fists, he threw her down stairs.

PIPPA: Which served her quite right, I should say.

Here ends the Second Day
of the
Pleasing Dialogues of M. Pietro Aretino.

THE ART OF THE PROCURESS

Why isn't there some one to write down all these things and have them printed?

The third and last day of the Pleasing Dialogues of Aretino, in which Nanna and Pippa, seated in a garden, listen to a Godmother and a Nurse conversing on the Art of the Procuress.

PROLOGUE

I am astonished Solomon did not lay hold of such subtleties as these.

GODMOTHER: The art of the Procuress and that of the Whore, my dear Nurse, are not merely sisters but twins; and Madonna Lust is the mother and Messer Bordello the father, so say the chronicles. But I believe, rather than that the art of the Procuress is the daughter of the Whore's trade, that the Whore's trade comes from the belly of the Procuress.

NURSE: Why do you enter into this dispute with me?

GODMOTHER: By the leg which I hope he breaks who took away my right hand, because it must be that the art of the Procuress gives birth to that of the Whore; you may be assured of this, for so it is, and since it is so, we should not be regarded as the offspring of every great and stinking prostitute who happens to sit above us on the feast days.

NURSE: Well, well! I am astonished to think that Solomon did not lay hold of such subtleties as these.

GODMOTHER: But let us go on, being content with our art; which I hope to revive by recounting to you and, in the right time and place, making you see how the Whore renders us honor, having none of her own, and how even the Signori confess it by placing us, when they talk among themselves in secret, *destram patribus*. Listen, then, and afterwards tell me what you think.

NURSE: You see I am all attention.

GODMOTHER: Nurse, I am more certain of this than of anything which Nanna here may have been able to teach

her Pippa. I know that the whore's is not a trade for everyone. Her life is a game of chance, and for one that wins, there are a thousand blanks; but the procuress' demands even more acuteness. I believe that when the whores would separate themselves from us, they are as mad as a pair of hands would be which should try to wash themselves by pouring the water upon themselves. The Procuress' art fishes at the bottom of the Whore's, and she need not turn up her nose at us, for that is the case.

STORY OF A FOX

They gave him Morgante's laugh.

GODMOTHER: Where were we?

NURSE: We had come to the one about the fox and the mule-drivers.

GODMOTHER: Ah, that is a fine one. There was a certain fox, so old her fur was turning white, very wicked and malicious, and as crafty as the one who said to Godfather Wolf, when that big blockhead fell into a bucket he was drawing out of the well: "The world is a ladder, and some go up and some go down.[1]

NURSE: And he was right, wasn't he?

GODMOTHER: This fox, desiring to get her belly full of fish, went to the lake of Perugia to see what she could steal; and having stood there a while on the side of a hill, with her tail drooping peacefully, with her snout in the air and her ears pricked, she saw coming toward her a band of mule-drivers. Their mules, tethered by a rope, were munching the straw in the bags which they wore on their mouths, and the muleteers were chattering about the scarcity of certain fish and the abundance of pike, praising a certain tench which they had devoured that morning with cabbage and sauce and planning how they would kill a great eel as soon as they had unloaded their pack-saddles. As soon as Monna Fox saw them, she smiled in her way and, throwing herself across their path, pretended to be dead. When she felt them draw near, she held her breath, as one does who crouches under water, and spread out her legs; nor did she so much as move, and anyone would have sworn that she was dead. The mules, which had glimpsed her

[1] *il mondo e fatto a scale, per cie, chi scende e chi sale,* a well known proverb.

from some little distance away, had more feeling in the matter than their drivers. The latter, when they saw her, gave vent to an "Oh, Oh, Oh" as one does who sees a hare dart from a cluster of grain no higher than a hand. They ran up in a crowd to seize her and take her hide. All laid hold of her at once, each one claiming her for his own; and they came near cutting themselves to pieces in that way mule-drivers have, each one crying, "I saw her first," "I got her before you did;" and if it had not been for an old man, who put a black stone and a number of white ones in a hat, shook them up, and made the crowd draw lots, there is no doubt that a number of them would have done for each other. As it was, they were satisfied.

NURSE: Talk often leads to sword-points and lances.

GODMOTHER: The one who drew the fox, bending over and touching her, perceived that she was warm. "By God," he said, "she's only just dead, and she's fat enough, so far as I can see." Saying this, he put her into the hamper of his mule and went back to join the others, whose anger had now passed. They went along in as friendly a fashion as ever and in their usual manner. The fine dame of a fox took advantage of this. Perceiving that she was not seen, she turned over very gently and, being half-starved, made a hole in the fish of those villains. Having devoured those in both hampers, she gave a leap, as one does who hurtles a wide ditch, leaving behind her only the patter of her heels. One of the mule-drivers saw her and gave a cry. When he ran up to the place where the fox that was supposed to be dead had been left, he did not see it. There was much scorn then for that brave fellow who had wanted to fight for it. Indeed, they gave him Morgante's laugh.

NURSE: Margutte's, you mean to say, don't you?

GODMOTHER: Morgante's!

NURSE: Margutte's, I tell you, Margutte's.

A GAME FOR STRANGERS

And they could all go on waiting.

GODMOTHER: Sometimes, after lunch, I used to go for a walk among the Benches, through the Borough and all the way to St. Peter's, just to look over the softies from the country. There is a way of knowing these, just as there is of knowing melons, though it is not the same way. When I saw that I had one, I would approach him giddily and speak to him. "From what country are you, my good man?" Then I would learn how long he had been at Rome and that he was looking for a master. There would be other talk of this sort, and I would make myself quite at home with him from the very first. And so, we would strike up a friendship, wondering together at the crowd which passed the Ponte Santo Angelo. Finally, I would say to him: "Would you mind coming with me to where I live, for I have to settle with my landlady, and I don't know these four-farthing pieces, these *giulii* and other coins; in fact, I don't know one ducat from another." Then the simpleton, with a "Certainly, I will," and without being the least bit on his guard, would come trotting after me. I would take him to a house where there was a young whore; and when we got there, I would say to her, "Call your mother." And she, who knew the game, would reply: "She's waiting for you at her aunt's house, and she left word you were to go there by all means; she has something or other to tell you, and you can come back later and settle your bill."

NURSE: Such goings-on I never did hear of.

GODMOTHER: "*Sta bene*," I would say, and then, turning to the old crow who was with me: "I'll be back right away; you can have your supper while I am gone." He, seeing how things were, would say: "Go on; I'll wait for you a year if necessary." And then, after they had spent the day in talk, the poor fellow, not being able to withstand the strumpet's caresses any longer, would give in, thinking he would be able to go scot-free. But when he would go to leave, she would raise an uproar and take his cloak, shoving him out of the house with insults.

NURSE: Ah, eh, oh.

GODMOTHER: Every day I used to get them in this manner, and he who did not have a farthing might leave the clothes on his back behind him. And they could all go on waiting for me to return!

THE JEALOUS HUSBAND

And all who come to see must say
"She is a pearl in every way."

GODMOTHER: A certain jealous husband, one of the most obstinate wretches you ever saw, was so jealous that at night he would bar not only the room but the windows of the bedroom, the hall and the kitchen; nor did he ever retire without first having given a look under and above the bed, the trunks and every possible place. He was suspicious of his relatives and his friends, and he did not even want his own mother to talk to his innamorata. If anyone even passed by her, he would fall into a fury, with a "Who is he?" and "Who is she?" When he left the house, he would lock and seal her in, in order to find out if she was deceiving him. No man or woman ever knocked at the door, but he would at once cry out, "Away, ruffians!" Now I knew all this which I am telling you, and I also knew something about incantations and cures; so I watched to see if there was anything the matter with the husband, and I discovered he had a tooth which often killed him. Then it was I laid my plans, and I said to a certain one, who was very much in love with the pretty prisoner: "Don't despair."

NURSE: You encourage me simply by telling me how you encouraged him.

GODMOTHER: Having put heart into the dejected one, I sent a certain big glutton that I knew to the house of the jealous husband, where he kept the young wench under lock and key. I told this fellow that, when the

crowd was passing, he should fall down in anguish, writhe and cry out: "I'm mad! I'm dying! This tooth is killing me!" He did so, and while he was crying and frothing at the mouth, a crowd of more than thirty pious persons gathered about him. Even the Madonna, who had been commanded not to appear at the window or the door, was attracted by the noise and came to the balcony. At this point, I came by, and, seeing him lying there, inquired what was the cause. When I learned that he was crucified with the tooth-ache, I said: "Give me room. I've no doubt I shall be able to cure him. Open your mouth." And the rascal opened his mouth and showed me the tooth, and I placed on it a bit of straw in the form of a cross, mumbled some prayer or other, and made him repeat three times, "*Credo, credo, credo.*" His pain was banished at once, and everyone was astonished at the miracle, and I left with a flock of ragamuffins at my heels, who, in their simplicity, were telling everybody about the tooth.

NURSE: Why isn't there someone to write down all these things and have them printed?

GODMOTHER: While I was returning home, the jealous husband appeared and, seeing a crowd about his door, was afraid that some mischief had been done him; but when he heard about my little trick, he ran to his wife and said: "Did you see that tooth cured?" "What tooth?" she replied. "Since I came into this house I've never had the air, nor do I know anything about what people in the street are doing, as you see well enough." When the suspicious wretch heard this story, he came to hunt me up and showed me his own tooth, which made his very mouth stink. I looked at it and said to him: "I don't want to wrong the dentist, and I have a conscience in the matter, but still, I want to relieve your pain. Where do you live?" The more he tried to tell me, the farther I was from understanding. It ended by

his taking me home with him and introducing me to her whom I was to convert to the love of etcetera.

NURSE: You mean to tell me you made yourself at home in his house through such a trick as that?

GODMOTHER: That's just what I'm telling you, nothing else.

NURSE: You don't say.

GODMOTHER: I had time, and more than time, to worm my way into My Lady's heart, to convince her of the death-in-life she was leading, locked up like that, and to present the petition of my gentleman friend. Since she had not entirely lost her reason, it did not take her long to come over to my way of thinking. She not only consented to see a certain fine youth, but she ended by eloping with him. That, however, is not what I wanted to tell you. The joke comes at the end.

NURSE: I'd like to hear it.

GODMOTHER: The jealous poltroon had not had the pain he used to have for perhaps twenty days, while I was practising at his house. He was afraid he would lose me; and so, with gifts, promises and all sorts of foolish talk, he tried to get out of me the secret prayer which I used in curing teeth; that is, he thought he was going to get it out of me. I, who had neither prayer nor legend, as soon as his wife had fled, went to hunt him up. I found him in church talking with one of his friends and went up to him and handed him the following incantation:

My lady surely is divine;
She passes orange water and has the stink
Of musk and ambergris and civet, too, I think.
And when she combs her pretty hair,
Rubies rain down through the air.
That nectar of her mouth, you see,
Is as ambrosia to me.
And in those parts that are most nice
Are emeralds in place of lice.

And all who come to see must say
She is a pearl in every way.

You can imagine, Nurse, what happened then, and what this jealous madman said when he read the joke, and when he went home and did not find his lady friend there.

NURSE: I can imagine it well enough.

Here ends the third and last day
of the
Pleasing Dialogues of M. Pietro Aretino.

THE COURTEZAN

[*La Cortigiana*]

by

PIETRO ARETINO

"L'è pure sfacciata questa
tua Corte . . . . ella
parta la mitera,
e non se ne
vergogna."

Translator's Note

La Cortigiana *is the second of Aretino's "Medusa works," the other being, as we have seen, the* Ragionamenti. *In both* The Courtezan *and the* Dialogues, *the author flays relentlessly the vices of an age—his own. In the play, it is the court of Rome under the Medici Popes which is the target for Aretino's annihilating satire, the victim of his merciless realism. It is to be remembered that Pietro had himself lived at court and knew whereof he wrote. He had fared none too luckily there, had been driven out once on account of his* Sonnets *and, in the end, barely had escaped with his life. He never forgot nor forgave the attempted assassination by the papal favorite, Giberti. This accounts for his animus in the matter—Aretino was never without a bias—but the picture he gives us is, we are forced from the accounts of other writers to believe, hardly overdrawn.*

The Courtezan *is surprising in its essential modernity. It has a certain apparent formlessness which is characteristic of some of the best drama, as well as fiction, of recent years. Indeed, it is almost cinematographic in spots. It is a series of pictures. Hutton speaks of the* Cortigiana *and the* Marescalco *as "probably the best Italian comedies before Goldoni." This estimate is, likely, correct. The British biographer also speaks of* The Courtezan *as "The first dramatic work in Italian which completely disregards the classic models of Plautus and Terence and sets life as the writer saw it, the life of his own time, on the stage." At the very outset, in the closing lines of his* Prologue, *we hear the author hurling defiance at the pedants and their rules: "For the chains that hold the mills on the river shall not bind the madmen of today . . . for we are living in another manner at Rome than that in which they lived at Athens." A character shall not appear more than five times in a scene, the pedants say. Mine shall come out as often as they choose, says Aretino. He practically abolishes the aside and is rather sparing of the soliloquy.*

Perhaps, however, his most distinctly modern quality as a dramatist is one which our contemporary Maiden Aunts would call his "unpleasantness." Mere ribaldry and hilarious smut were by no means novel; but there is in Aretino something more than this. He was "unpleasant" often, in theme and in detail, in the same sense in which our modern novelists and playwrights frequently are. Instances might be cited, but they abound in this play.

Something should be said with reference to the language employed in the translation of this drama. An attempt has been made to render it into the American, rather than the English language. Something of the same thing was attempted with the Dialogues, *but the effort has been more conscious in the present instance. With a writer so essentially and intensely modern as Aretino, there would seem to be little point in doing his work into the language of Shakespeare, the sixteenth century in England. For this reason, all the old properties and clichès of classic English drama have been avoided so far as possible, with the object of seeking, rather, the current and homely Americanism. Only a few words, such as "poltroon," "knave," etc., have been retained in order, while bringing out the modern spirit of the play, not to be false to the century in which it was written. It has seemed to the present translator that his task was to preserve here as nice as possible a balance. He wishes he might have succeeded better than he has. He has kept in mind, too, that writing "in American" does not mean, of necessity, writing in the idiom of Ring Lardner or George Ade. It is amazing to note how many of our contemporary Americanisms were current in the* Cinquecento*—an interesting philological article might be written on the subject—and in a great many instances, faithful and literal rendering of the Italian text called for an American slang phrase. In a number of instances, this has been indicated in the notes.*

Finally, this play should serve as another bit of evidence as to the Italian origin of Shakespearean and pre-Shakespearean English comedy.

To The Great Cardinal of Trent

Of the miracles which are wrought by the goodness of God, the votive offerings which are made bear testimony; those which come from the valor of men are witnessed by the statues which are consecrated to those men; and of that love which the courtesy of Princes bears to those of good genius we are made certain by the works which are addressed to those Princes. And so, I address to you my Courtezan, *which you should hold dear, for in it all the world shall be enlightened as to those merits which I honor here, you being at once a Cardinal and a Lord. Indeed, reading here of the life of Courts and of Lords, you should be proud of yourself for being so far removed from the manners of these; wherefore, rejoice to see yourself different from your fellows, in the same manner as would a young girl disporting with a female Saracen of an ugly disfavor, who imitates her in every action, so that in her every movement the Saraceness appears to be more beautiful and more gracious. And thus, all the many gentlemen who serve you, all the virtuous ones who celebrate you, and all the many Cavalieri who court you will end by knowing (hearing of the ways of others) of what quality is the man whom they adore, in the same manner in which you have come to know the diabolic Luther, against the malignancy of whom all the Christian faith which lives under the King of the Romans has made a shield of your goodness, whose good counsel in every royal action always makes the doubtful clear and the perilous secure. And just as you could not be ruled by the grace of a better King than Ferdinando, so his Majesty could not put himself into the hands of a better minister than the great and most reverend Trent. But if you are such as this, should I not hope that you will take with a generous hand the gift which I, who am so low of person, bring to a personage so lofty.*

Pietro Aretino.

THE COURTEZAN

A Comedy in Five Acts

THE PERSONS

A Stranger
A Gentleman
Messer Maco
Sanese, *His Groom*
Maestro Andrea
Furfante, *Who Sells Stories*
Rosso, Cappo } *Parabolano's Grooms*
Flamminio, Valerio } *Parabolano's Chamberlains*
Signor Parabolano, *Who Is In Love*
A Fisherman
Sacristan of St. Peters'
Sempronio, *an Old Man*
Alvigia, *a Procuress*
Grillo, *Messer Maco's Groom*
Zoppino
Guardiano of Araceli
Maestro Mercurio, *a Doctor*
Togna, *Wife of Arcolano*
Arcolano, *a Baker*
A Jew
Sheriff and Bailiffs
Biagina, *Signora Camilla's Maid.*

PROLOGUE

Recited by a Stranger and a Gentleman

STRAN. This place appears to be the very mind of Antonio da Leva Magno, so beautiful is it and so loftily adorned. Surely, there must be going to be some great feast here. I shall ask this Gentleman about it, who is passing. Oh, Signor, can you tell me what is the reason for all these pompous preparations?

GENT. They are for a comedy which is to be given here directly.

STRAN. Who has composed it, the divine Marchesa di Pescara?

GENT. No, for his immortal pen is engaged in placing his great consort among the gods.

STRAN. Is it by the Signora Veronica da Correggio?

GENT. No, it is not hers, for she employs her lofty genius in more glorious tasks.

STRAN. Is it by Luigi Alamanni?

GENT. Luigi celebrates the merits of the Most Christian King, the daily bread of all virtue.

STRAN. Is it by Ariosto?

GENT. Alas, Ariosto has gone to Heaven, since he had no more need of glory on the earth.

STRAN. Great loss has the world in such a man, who, in addition to his virtues, was kindness itself.

GENT. It would have been well if he had been Sorrow herself.

STRAN. Why?

GENT. Because then he would never have died.

STRAN. And that is no idle talk. But tell me, is this something by the most gentle Molza, or by Bembo, the father of the Muses, who should be the first of all to speak?

GENT. It is the work neither of Bembo nor of Molza, for the one is writing the *Istoria Veneziana* and the other the praises of Ippolito de' Medici.

STRAN. Is it by Guidiccione?

GENT. No, for he would not bring his miraculous hand so low as to write such foolish things as these.

STRAN. Then certainly it must be by Ricco,[1] one of whose very grave works was read to the Pope and the Emperor.

GENT. It is not his, for he has now turned to more worthy pursuits.

STRAN. It seems to me, it must be the work of some sheep, *quae pars est;* it may be that God is making the poets rain on us like the Lutherans; if the forest of Baccano were made of Laurels, there still would not be enough to crown the crucifiers of Petrarch, who, with their commentaries, make him say things which ten strokes of the lash would never have made him confess. And it is a good thing that Dante, who with his deviltries leaves the beasts behind, should now be put on the cross himself.

GENT. Ha, ha, ha!

STRAN. Perhaps it is by Giulio Camillo.

GENT. He is not the author, for he is engaged in demonstrating to the King the great and miraculous invention of his genius.[2]

STRAN. Is it by Tasso?

GENT. Tasso is waiting to thank the Princes of Salerno for their courtesy. To tell you the truth, it is a composition of Pietro Aretino's.

STRAN. If I thought I should split with discomfort, I still should like to hear it; for I know certainly that I should hear things of the Prophets and the Evangelists.

[1] Agostino Ricci, the Lucchese, who at the age of ten wrote a comedy, *I tre tiranni* and then set himself to study medicine, becoming chief physician to the Pope.
[2] Reference is to Giulio Camillo Delminio and his *Teatro*.

And perhaps it looks to someone in particular?

GENT. He preaches the goodness of King FRANCIS with an incredible fervor.

STRAN. And who does not praise His Majesty?

GENT. Does he not praise also the Duke Alessandro, the Marchese del Vasto and Claudio Rangone, the gem of valor and of sense?

STRAN. Three flowers do not make a garland.

GENT. And the most liberal Massimino Stampa?

STRAN. Do you find he speaks of any others?

GENT. Lorena, Medici and Trent.

STRAN. It is true he praises all these, but they deserve it. But why do you not say the Cardinal de' Medici, the Cardinal de' Lorena, and the Cardinal di Trento?

GENT. In order not to assassinate their names with the word, Cardinal.

STRAN. Oh, a pretty pass! Ha, ha, ha! Tell me, then, of what does he treat?

GENT. He portrays two pieces of waggery at one time. In the first, Messer Maco Sanese appears upon the scene, who has come to Rome to satisfy a vow which his father had made to make a Cardinal of him; and having been given to understand that no one can become a Cardinal who does not first become a Courtier, he takes Maestro Andrea for his pedant, who believes himself to be the best master in the art of making courtiers; and having been led by Maestro Andrea to take hot baths, he holds it for certain that hot baths are the best means of making courtiers; and at the end, ruined and repaired, he wants all Rome for himself, in the manner which shall be heard. And with Messer Maco there mingles a certain Signor Parabolano of Naples (one of those Acursii[1] and one of those Sarapichi[1], who, taken from the stirrups and the stalls, have been set up by a bold-faced Fortune to govern

[1]Papal "Ganymedes."

the world); this fellow, having fallen in love with Livia, the wife of Luzio Romano, revealing his secret to no one, thinks everything is hidden, but he is overheard by Rosso, his favorite groom, and is betrayed by him; for the latter makes him think that the lady with whom he is in love is inflamed for him, and bringing him Alvigia, a procuress, he makes him believe that she is Livia's nurse, and in place of Livia he causes him to consummate matrimony with the wife of Arcolano, a baker. The comedy will tell you the rest in due course for I do not rightly remember it all.

STRAN. Where do such gentle jests take place?

GENT. In Rome, where you are, don't you see?

STRAN. So this is Rome! Mercy on me, I would never have recognized it.

GENT. I would remind you that she has just done purging her sins in the hands of the Spaniards, and she has come well out of it to be no worse off than she is. And now, let's withdraw to one side, and if you see the characters come out more than five times in a Scene, do not laugh at it, for the chains that hold the mills on the river shall not bind the madmen of today. Moreover, do not marvel if the comic style is not here observed as is customary, for we are living in another manner at Rome than that in which they lived in Athens.

STRAN. Who doubts it?

GENT. Look, here's Messer Maco. Ha, ha, ha!

ACT FIRST[1]

(*Enter Messer Maco and Sanese.*)

MACO. In short, Rome is the *Coda Mundi.*

SAN. *Capus*, you mean to say.

MACO. It's all the same. And if I had not come here. . . .

SAN. Your bread would be mouldy.

MACO. I was saying that if I had not come here I never would have believed that there was any place more beautiful than Sienna.

SAN. Did I not tell you that Rome was Rome? At Sienna you have the guard with its braves, the university with its doctors, the fonte Branda, the fonte Becci, the Piazza with its crowds, the feast of mid-August, the carts with their candles, with the young kids, the fountains, the bull hunt, the race track and honey-cakes by the hundreds with the sweetbreads of Sienna.

MACO. Yes, but you don't say that it's favored by the Emperor.

SAN. You are not talking to the point.

MACO. Be quiet. Look at that monkey up there in the window. Mona, oh, Mona?

SAN. Aren't you ashamed of yourself to go through the street calling apes? You're lucky if they do not take you for a madman, without knowing that you come from Sienna.

MACO. Listen, there's a parrot talking.

SAN. That's a woodpecker, master.

MACO. It's a parrot, in spite of what you say.

SAN. It is one of those animals of many colors that your grandfather used to buy for a parrot.

[1]No effort has been made to retain the original numerous scene divisions. The stage directions for the most part are the translator's own.

MACO. But I showed the feathers to the goldsmith who works in brass, and he said that, by comparison, they were from a parrot right enough.

SAN. You're a beast, if you will pardon me, to believe a goldsmith.

MACO. I'll punish you.

SAN. Don't be angry.

MACO. I will be angry, I will, I will. And if you do not show the proper respect for me, it will be bad for you.

SAN. I do respect you.

MACO. How much?

SAN. A ducat's worth.

MACO. Do you know, I like you now.

(*Enter Maestro Andrea*)

AND. Are you looking for a master?

MACO. You know well enough that I am the master.

SAN. Let me do the talking, for I understand the speech of Rome.

MACO. Off with you.

AND. Tell me, if you are looking for a place.

SAN. Messer Maco, learned *in libris*, rich and of Sienna . . .

AND. To the point. I tell you, I will give you five *carlins* a month, and you will have nothing else to do but curry four horses and two mules, carry water and wood for the kitchen, sweep the house, follow me at stirrup, and clean my clothes. The rest of the time, you can lead the life of Riley.[1]

MACO. To tell you the truth, I have come here post haste to become . . .

SAN. Become a Cardinal and hold an audience with . . .

MACO. The King of France.

SAN. Also the pope —didn't I tell you to leave the talking to me?

AND. Ha, ha, ha!

MACO. What are you laughing at, Mister?

AND. I am laughing at the idea of you seeking an audience. Don't you know that you must first become a Courtier

[1] *menarvi la rilla.*

and then a Cardinal? And I am the master to teach you the Courtier's Art. I have been the making of the Monsignor de la Starta, the Most Reverend di Baccano, the Provost of Montemari, the Patriarch of Magliana and a thousand others. And I shall be pleased to make a courtier of your Lordship, too, for you have the air of one who will be an honor to his country.

MACO. What do you say, Sanese?

SAN. That's all right with me, la, la, that goes with me, that goes.

MACO. When can you lend me a hand?

AND. Today, tomorrow, or whenever it is pleasing to your Lordship.

MACO. Now suits me.

AND. By your grace, I'll go for the book which teaches how to become a Courtier, and I'll return to your Lordship on the wing. Where are you stopping?

MACO. } In the house of Ceccotto, the Genovese.
SAN. }

AND. Speak one at a time, for speaking two at a time is not one of the precepts.

MACO. This poltroon threw me off.

SAN. I am not a poltroon. You know I was going to be a soldier, and you did not want me to run the risk.

AND. Be at peace, for poltroon at Rome is the name of a feast day. I'm going now, but I shall be back right away.

MACO. What is your name?

AND. Maestro Andrea. I commend myself to your Highness.

MACO. Farewell.

SAN. Come back soon.

AND. I'll be with you in a jiffy. (*He goes out*)

MACO. *Sic fata volunt.*

SAN. There you go again with your prophecies.

MACO What are you babbling about?

SAN. I said your Highness. Didn't you hear the Maestro say, "I commend myself to Your Highness?"

MACO. I commend myself to Your Highness. With baretta in hand, *è vero*?

SAN. *Signor, si.* Get yourself on your legs, pull down your vest, do some tall spitting, and you're all O. K.[1] Strut! Fine, that's fine!

(Enter Furfante, a newsboy)

FUR. Stories! Stories![2]

MACO. Be quiet, what's he crying there?

SAN. He must be crazy.

FUR. Stories! Fine Stories! the war on the Turks in Hungary, the preaching of Fra Martino, the council, stories! stories! the affair in England, the pomp of the Pope and the Emperor, the Circumcision of Via Vova, the sack of Rome, the siege of Florence, the fall of Marseilles, Stories! Stories! Stories!

MACO. Run, fly, trot, Sanese. Here's a *giulio*. Buy the one about the Courtiers, so that I can become a Courtier before the Maestro comes; but don't you become a Courtier before I do, do you understand?

SAN. The devil, no. Do you want the books, the orations or the sheets? [3] Hey there! Oh you! oh you! I hope he breaks his neck! He's turned the corner; I'll run after him.

MACO. Run, I tell you! *(Sanese goes out)*

MACO. Oh what a street! It's like a cemetery. I see, up there in that window, a fine Signora. She must be the

[1] *Tiratevi la persona in le gambe, acconciatevi la veste a dosso, sputate tondo, o bene. Passeggiate largo, bene, benissimo.*

[2] *A le belle istorie, a le belle istorie.* Later, it is merely *istorie, istorie.* This is nothing if not our "Extra!" This scene, indeed, is astonishingly modern. We see here modern journalism in the making. Reference is to the Pasquinades. See Hutton, pp. 35ff: "These verses were even then distributed in fly-sheets, it might seem precisely as the 'istorie' are cried and sold in *La Cortigiana* and as songs and verses are sold today on coloured single sheets of paper in Tuscany."

[3] *Debbe esser pazzo.*

Duchess of Rome. I feel that I am falling in love; if I am made Cardinal, if I become a Courtier, she'll not get away from me. She's looking at me; she's admiring me; I'll not let her slip out of my claws. There's Sanese. Where is the oration, Sanese?

(*Sanese comes in*)

SAN. Here it is, read the superscription.

MACO. "The life of the Turks, composed by the Bishop of Nocera." Oh the devil take you! What do I care about the Turks? I feel like washing myself when I even talk about them. Take it away.

SAN. I told him the one about the Courtier, and he gave me this one instead: "Give your Master, if you will, a dose of the syphilis from Stracino of Sienna."

MACO. What does he mean, syphilis? Am I a man to have a thing like that?

SAN. Is it so bad a thing to have?

MACO. Come on home, I'm going to murder you.

SAN. I won't stand for that, Master.

MACO. Come on then, I'll take it out on Grillo, and let you go.

(*They go out. Rosso and Cappa come in*)

ROSSO. Our master is the most gentle knave, the most excellent dolt, and the most venerable ass in all Italy. You have to speak to him by the points of the Moon.

CAPPA. Certainly, anyone who said that he was not a villain would be lying in his throat; and I have noticed one of his scurviest knaveries, when he says to servants who apply for a position: "You try me out for a month, and I will try you for a month; if I please you, you will remain, and if you do not please me, you will go." At the end of the month he says: "You will not do for me."

ROSSO. I understand the reason for that; he is well-served and does not have to pay a salary.

CAPPA. It is to laugh, and to curse God at the same time,

to see him leaning on two of his servants to have his shoes tied. If the strings are not of equal length and if they do not happen to match one another, his cries go up to Heaven.

Rosso. And don't forget the perfumed card which must aways be borne beween two silver plates upon occasion, and which must always be inspected by him first.

Cappa. Ha, ha! I have to laugh at him in church. For every Ave Maria which the page who stands in front of him mutters, he sends up a Paternoster from the rosary which he holds in his hand; and in taking the holy water, the said page first kisses his hand; and then, dipping his hand in the water, the master sprinkles it over him on the point of his finger and makes the sign of the cross on his forehead with a most Spanish reverence.

Rosso. Ha, ha! He reminds me of the quondam prior of Capua who, whenever he urinated, had one page to open his cod-piece and another to take out his night-ingale. And when he combs his beard, a chamberlain must stand in front of him, mirror in hand; and if one hair happens to be out of line, the barber's in a hard way.

Cappa. Ha ha. Tell me, have you observed the stupidities he commits in cleaning his teeth after a meal?

Rosso. As if I hadn't observed them! I am amazed at the diligence he employs, and after he has spent three hours with the water and some time with the napkin, he uses his finger to brush them; of all the silly things I ever heard, he opens his mouth as wide as he can to show his white teeth, and the majestic way he struts is something not to be passed over in silence, or the way he pulls his beard or the lascivious glances he gives to others.

Cappa. I think we ought to put a hatchet in his head some night, don't you?

Rosso. That we ought, so others like him would learn a lesson. But here's Valerio. I doubt if he has heard us. Let's withdraw to one side.

(*They go out. Valerio comes in.*)

Val. Aha, drunkards, traitors, gallows-birds, where have you fled? But I've heard you. A fine thing it is to treat a master the way you do! Go hang yourselves, go! As if Rosso had not been well-looked-after by the Signor. The clothes the master gives him every year are more than he is worth. But fellows like these must do and say the worst they can against the Lords who would favor them. Whoever becomes a Dove, the Falcon at once eats him.

(*Flaminio comes in.*)

Flam. What quarrels are these you are holding with yourself?

Val. I am beside myself over the poltrooneries which I have just heard spoken of the Signor by Rosso and Cappa. And if it were not that I do not want to do so great a a wrong to the gallows, which is waiting for them, I surely would give them what they deserve. And all this comes from treating them too well; for, make a servant the companion of your appetities, he at once becomes the master.

Flam. Who doesn't know that? But do you think there are no others besides Rosso? I have heard with my own ears, from one whom you know, certain obscure things of his master, who, because the latter in truth is such a man as must be nowadays, and because he is a Signor like the others, looks better after them than he does to himself. But why am I telling you all this? These Lords of the court no longer take for their service the virtuous and the noble, but the ignorant and the plebeian.

Val. A *gran maestro* wants to do and say what he pleases without respect to anyone; he wants, in the house and in the bed, to have the food that is to his taste,

without being reproved for it, and when he does not happen to know what he wants, the only thing left for him to do is to beat, vituperate and abuse the one who serves him, a thing which he could not do with a virtuous man or with one who was well-born. A noble would rather beg than empty a urinal, or clean a thundermug; and a virtuous man would split before he would wink at the dishonorable desires which come to these Signori. And so let us make up our minds that he who would do well at court must come there deaf, blind, mute, asinine, a cow and a goat, I should say.

FLAM. This comes from the fact that the majority of the great ones are of obscure origin, and so cannot bear to look upon those who come of illustrious blood. They force themselves to bear arms and to find cognomens which will make them appear genteel.

VAL. But who is more noble than the Signor Costantino, who was the despot of Lamorea and the Prince of Macedonia, and now is governor of Fano?

FLAM. Suppose we let this conversation go, since everything is in the hands of Fate. Tell me something; what do you think of a master who does nothing but sigh?

VAL. I think he must be in love.

FLAM. It couldn't be anything else. Let's go walk toward Belvedere for an hour.

VAL. Let's go.

(They go out. Parabolano and Rosso come in.)

PAR. Where do you come from?

ROSSO. From the *Campo di Fiori.*

PAR. Who was with you?

ROSSO. Frappa, Squarcia, Tartaglia, and Targa; and I have read the *cartello* which Don Cirimonia di Moncada has sent to the Signor Lindezza di Valenza. Then I did the *Via de la Pace*, and I saw the Signora, who spoke of going to some vineyard or other; I was on the point

of giving a couple of dagger thrusts to the fellow I saw talking to her, but I restrained myself.

PAR. Another flame is cooking my heart now.

ROSSO. If I were a woman, I would bank my fire before I would give it to a Signor. Two days ago you were in spasms over her, and now you turn up your nose at her; in short, gentlemen don't know what they want.

PAR. Stop your chattering, take these ten *scudi*, buy all the lampreys you can find, and bring them to that gentleman, the Sanese,[1] who lodges in the house of Ceccotto.

ROSSO. What madness is this?

PAR. Madness or wisdom I shall go there, for I cannot forget the honor that was done to me at his house in Sienna.

ROSSO. It would be better to give him a couple of whelps.

PAR. Are dogs good to eat, you sheep?

ROSSO. Four artichokes would be a fine present.

PAR. Where will you find artichokes at this time of the year?

ROSSO. Grow them.

PAR. Go buy what I've told you to, and tell him to eat them for love of me, and that I shall come to call on him tomorrow, for today I am very busy at the palace.

ROSSO. Ten tortoises would not be displeasing to him; take my advice, master, in making presents to your friends.

PAR. Are tortoises a gift to make to one of my equals, you beast? Hurry and bring him the lampreys, and don't let me have more than twenty words out of you.

ROSSO. More than thirty I do not know. It is a cruel thing that I should not have been sent by the Sofi to the Pope as an Ambassador. I can hear myself saying, "Most serene, most reverend, most excellent, your Majesty, Holiness, Paternity, Magnificence, Omnipo-

[1]Sanese: one of Sienna, from which city Maco comes; also the name of Maco's servant.

tence, and Reverence, everything up to the *Viro Domino;*" and I should make a bow like this, and another one like this.

PAR. *Altaria fumant.* Help me off with my cloak and take it home. I am going to see the horses and the *giardino.*

(*He goes out.*)

ROSSO (*holding the cloak of Parabolano*). I'm going to see how I look in silk. Oh, what I would give for a mirror to see myself rigged out in these gallantries. The truth is, clothes make the page, and if those Signori were to go as poorly clothed as we do, they would look like monkeys or baboons. I am astonished they do not banish all mirrors so they would not have to see those big porters' candles that they call faces. But I am a fine idiot not to make *leva ejus* with this cloak and the *scudi* that are in it. It is the greatest charity there is to rob a Lord. But we will go now and swindle this fisherman fellow; the Lord we will assassinate at our leisure. I see a fish-seller coming there. To me he has the air of a business man, but I think he's a cold potato.[1]

(*Enter the fisherman.*)

This cloak is too tight for me. I'm used to going in a *cappa* and using gravity and force. This is not my style. What is it, Fisherman?

FISH. At your service.

ROSSO. Have you any other lampreys besides these?

FISH. The others have been taken by the steward of Fra Mariano, who's giving a dinner to Moro, Brandino, Proto, Troia—and all the gluttons of the palace.

ROSSO. After this, before all these others, I want you to give me first choice. I am the steward of N. S.,[2] and if you are a good fellow, the palace will do business with you.

FISH. I am your Lordship's slave, in fact, not thought.

ROSSO. How much do you want for these?

[1] *zugo.*

[2] i. e., the Pope.

Fish. Whatever is pleasing to your Lordship.
Rosso. Speak out.
Fish. Ten ducats of *carlins*, more or less, at your Lordship's pleasure.
Rosso. Eight would be a very good price.
Fish. Does your Lordship want them for a gift? Don't you see that I am a poor man and that I have a generous mind, in fact, not thought?
Rosso. Earth does not degrade gold. But do you think my groom leads a mule? You shall see that he leads a genet which it takes almost four hours to saddle. May I die if I don't chase you to the *bordello*.
Fish. Your Lordship will not be angry if I carry them home for him, and my bambolino shall stay here to watch the rest.
Rosso. That suits me. By the body of . . . If I meet you in the town, I'll give you something to remember . . . Off with you, my good fellow.
Fish. I am off.
Rosso. Are you Colonese or Orsino?
Fish. I hold to a victorious name: Palle, Palle.
Rosso. Of what country are you?
Fish. A Florentine, born at Porta Pinti, and I was the Landlord of a *chiassolino*, but I fell into disgrace.
Rosso. Aha! What is your name?
Fish. Il Faccenda,[1] at your service, and I have three sisters in the Town, at the sign of the Walnut Tree, at the pleasure of your Lordship.
Rosso. Have made for yourself a pair of stockings with my device.
Fish. I am grateful, indeed—in fact, not thought.
Rosso. Old sport, the *maestro di casa* is at the gate of San Piero. I'll have him pay you, although, to tell you the truth, he is very stingy with his *scudi*. Wait for me here, and I will see that you are taken care of.

[1]Business Man.

FISH. Hurry up about it.

(*Fisherman goes out.*)

ROSSO. Go on! Keep faith with servants! I'd like to break your neck with a club, you thief, you big-breeches, you traitor!

(*The sacristan of St. Peter's comes in.*)

Listen, father. That poor wretch you see there has a wife who is possessed, in the hostlery of the Moon, with ten spirits on her back; and so, I beseech your Reverence, for the love of God, take him and have him strapped to the *colonna;* and I would have your Lordship understand, the poor wretch is half silly and altogether balmy.[1]

SAC. As soon as I have spoken a few words to my friend over there, I shall be very glad to be of service. Call him back.

ROSSO. Sire Faccenda!

(*Fisherman comes in.*)

FISH. Here I am. What is your Lordship's command?

SAC. As soon as I have spoken ten words to my friend over there, I shall do my duty with you. Wait here.

FISH. As your Lordship commands.

(*Sacristan goes out.*)

ROSSO. Here are five *giulii*. Take them as a deposit for the stockingmaker. I will see him in Rome and pay him the rest.

FISH. Your Lordship is too kind. Take the lampreys, since you are going to the palace.

ROSSO. All right, since I must play the groom and the groom the master. *Addio.*

FISH. Listen, listen, Signor Steward. What kind of stockings are specified in your coat of arms?

ROSSO. Specify what you will, it makes no difference. *Sta' bene.* (*Rosso goes out*).

FISH. What a knave! He pays me eight *scudi*, and I would

[1] *e tutto adombrato.*

have given them to him for four; he's a good enough *spenditore*,[1] ha, ha! Just because he has a silk cloak, he thinks he's a six-hundred *fiorini* nag.[2] But isn't that Maestro ever going to stop his chatter? He is longer about it than a day without bread.

(*Sacristan comes in.*)

Sac. Well?

Fish. Your servant.

Sac. Pardon me if I have put you to any inconvenience.

Fish. What inconvenience? To serve you, I would even go to Paris.

Sac. I want to comfort you.

Fish. If you want to do me a charity, there are other ways than going to the Sepulchre; for in fact, I have five *bambolini*.

Sac. How many are there?

Fish. Ten.

Sac. That is a good many.

Fish. It is surely a load in these times.

Sac. They are not doing well, I take it?

Fish. No, Monsignor, lampreys are a light food.

Sac. Poor man, you are mad.

Fish. How, mad? Ask the doctor.

Sac. Do the spirits take you in the day-time or at night?

Fish. I have no fear of spirits, morning or night, Will your Lordship pay me, for I have business to do.

Sac. Your father left you a curse, that's certain.

Fish. It was curse enough to leave me a beggar.

Sac. I must say for you the masses of St. Gregory.

Fish. What the devil have lampreys to do with the masses of St. Gregory? Pay me, if you will, or I shall have to post you in the Calendar.

Sac. (*calling*) Take him! Take him, priests! Make the sign of the cross on him *in adiutorium altissimi*.

[1]Steward [one who spends.]

[2]A barbery horse which cost six-hundred fiorini d'oro. Hence, a presumptuous fellow, a braggart.

Fish. Ah, poltroon!
Sac. *Et homo factus est.*
Fish. Ah, Sodomite!
Sac. Aha! So you bite, do you?
Fish. With my fists, you knave!
Sac. *Et in virtute tua salvum me fac. Acqua santa.*
Fish. Let me go, traitor! So I'm bewitched, am I? I'm bewitched?
Sac. *In ignem aeternum.*
Fish. Where are you dragging me, you turn-coat priest!
Sac. I'll get him out of you. *Conculcabis leonem et draconem.*
(*The Sacristan drags him out. Parabolano comes in.*)
Par. Neither horses nor gardens nor any other pleasure can draw from my heart the obstinacy of that pleasant thought which the image of Livia has sculptured in me; and I am come to such a point that food to me is poison, repose is pain, day is darkness, and the night, which ought to quiet my soul, afflicts me so that, hating myself, I would rather die than live in such a state. But here is Maestro Andrea; if he has seen me, I shall be put into a *canzone;* it will be better to betake myself to my house.
(*He goes out. Maestro Andrea, with a book in his hand, and Rosso come in.*)
And. Ha, ha! I've found some fine sport! Aha! here's Rosso. How goes it, old fellow?
Rosso. You're laughing, and I'm laughing too. Ha, ha! A divine farce, a Fisherman, ha ha! I'll tell it to you at my leisure. I'm in a hurry to take these lampreys home; but he who should have them shall have half, and the other half I propose to eat, myself, at the most Reverend tavern. *Addio.*
And. I commend myself to you. (*Rosso goes out.*)
And. I wanted to be a master to Sanese, and here, I have passed myself off to him as a pedagogue, and I am bringing him this book which teaches the art of becoming a

Courtier. Ah, I must tell him that Augustus liked it. I ought to have taught it to my own father, rather than to a Sanese, if only my father had wanted to turn madman; what greater charity is there than to pay the horses for those who want to send their brains by post? It is a greater charity than it would be to cure a good part of the friars and priests. For as soon as the head becomes empty of brains, it is filled with states, grandeurs and treasuries, and such a one would not change his rank with a quondam dog-keeper of a Sarapica; he goes into ecstasies when you agree with what he says, and a fellow like that would not deign to change places with the Medici. And if I end by refining the madness of this simpleton Sanese, he will be under more obligations to me than are the treasuries of syphilis to the wood of India. I can see him strutting now, and with what grace. By my faith, but I would like to put him in the catalogue of the blockheads so as to make a solemn commemoration of him to the praise and glory of—I won't say of Sienna.

(*Maco comes in.*)

Salutations and consolations, etc.

Maco. Good day and good year. And the book, where is it?

And. Here it is, at your Lordship's pleasure.

Maco. I shall die if you do not read me a lesson at once.

And. You are facetious.

Maco. You are wrong to insult me.

And. Do you call it an insult to say you are facetious?

Maco. Yes, for I was never facetious, neither I nor anyone else of my house. And so, begin.

And. The principal thing which a Courtier must know is how to blaspheme; he must be a gambler, invidious, a whore-chaser, a heretic, an adulator, a slanderer, an ingrate, ignorant and asinine; he must know how to cheat, how to play the nymph, and he must be at once active and patient.

MACO. Easy, there, easy! What do you mean, active and patient? I don't understand that cipher.

AND. Man and wife can tell you.

MACO. You may be right. But how does one become a heretic? That is what I should like to know.

AND. Listen.

MACO. I'm listening.

AND. When anyone says to you that in the Court there is goodness, discretion, love, or conscience, say, "I don't believe it."

MACO. "I don't believe it."

AND. When anyone would have you believe that it is a sin to break Lent, say, "That's a joke."

MACO. "That's a joke."

AND. And finally, when anyone speaks well to you of the Court, say, "You're a liar."

MACO. It would be better if I were to say, "You lie by the throat."

AND. It would be more intelligible and briefer.

MACO. Why do Courtiers blaspheme, Maestro?

AND. In order to appear to be practical men, and on account of the cruelty of Acursio and the others who dispense the power of the Court, who, giving entree to poltroons and keeping the good servants in want, throw all Courtiers into such despair that they feel like renouncing their Baptism.

MACO. How does one set about it to be ignorant?

AND. By keeping yourself a buffalo.

MACO. And invidious?

AND. By bursting at the good fortune of others.

MACO. How does one become an adulator?

AND. By praising every piece of blockheadedness.

MACO. How does one deceive?

AND. By telling miracles.

MACO. How does one play the nymph?

AND. This every knavish he-whore of a Courtier can teach

you, who stands from one vespers to the other, like a pardoner cleaning vestments, and consumes hours before his mirror, in playing the game of the rich and in greasing antique pates, in talking Tuscan, Petrarch in hand, with a "yes in faith," with an "I swear to God," and with an "I kiss your hand," which appears to be the *totum continens* of the matter.

MACO. How does one slander?

AND. By speaking the truth, by speaking the truth.

MACO. How does one become an ingrate?

AND. By putting on a face as though you had never seen one who has done you a service.

MACO. How does one become an ass?

AND. Ask even the palace stairs. But this will be enough for the first lesson; in the second, we will treat of the art of *Culiseo*.[1]

MACO. Wait. The art of *Culiseo*. What kind of a thing is that?

AND. The treasure and the consolation of Rome.

MACO. How do you mean?

AND. I will tell you tomorrow; for now we are going to see Master Pasquino.

MACO. Who is Master Pasquino?

AND. One who has put a spoke in the wheels of the Signori and the Monsignori.

MACO. What art is his?

AND. He works by turn at poetry.

MACO. I also am a poet, both by letter and by the vulgate, and I know a fine epigram in my own praise.

AND. Who made it?

MACO. A very worthy man.

AND. Who is this very worthy man?

MACO. I am he.

AND. Aha! Recite it, for I want to hear it.

MACO (reciting).

[1] *culo:* rump.

Hanc tua Penelope musam meditaris avenam.
Nil mihi rescribas, nimium ne crede colori.
Cornua cum Lunae recubans sub tegmine fagi.
Tityre tu patulae lento tibi mittit Ulysses.

And. Get the hook! Get the hook! Thief! Thief!

Maco. Why do you shout like that, wise man?

And. Because some heroic madman has stolen your verses.

Maco. And who might that heroic madman be?

And. Oh, some valiant fellow at stealing his master's thunder.[1] But go on.

Maco (reciting).

Arma virumque cano vacinia nigra leguntur.
Italiam fato numerum sine viribus uxor.
Omnia vincit amor nobis ut carmina dicunt.
Silvestrem tenui, et nos cedamus Amori.

And. You ought to have them printed and entitled after the humor of Bologna, and I will write the life of the author, my good fellow.

Maco *Ago vobis gratia.*

And. And now home, where everything shall be arranged; but where is the servant?

Maco. Sanese is a poltroon, but Grillo is a worthy fellow; I want Grillo and not Sanese. Let us go in.

(*They go out. The Fisherman comes in from the* Colonna.)

Fish. *Roma, doma.* And I thought it was paradise! What cruelty is this? To a Florentine they do those things which I thought they would do only to a Sanese. I am mad, I am bursting; two hours they held me bound to the *Colonna* as one bewitched, with all the world around me, flaying me, pounding me, and striking at me. Who willed that I should have to beat the door, lose my lampreys and have them eaten by the cancer? I swear to God, I do not understand this Rome. I have not deceived anyone with my merchandise, but if I find

[1] *in disfidare a le cannonate*, etc.

that sacristan and those crazy priests, body, body . . . blood . . . I'll smash their noses, I'll break their bones and tear out their eyes. Cursed be anyone, Rome, who loves you or believes in you. And I will say it in her despite, I had thought that the punishment which Christ had given her at the hands of the Spaniards would have made her a better woman, but I find she is wickeder than ever.

(END OF ACT FIRST)

ACT SECOND

(*Enter Cappa.*)

CAPPA. He who has not been in a tavern does not know what paradise is. My good friend Rosso brought me here, and we have eaten five lampreys, which have put my throat in heaven. O holy tavern, miraculous tavern —I say holy, because in you there is no pain nor want, and you are miraculous for your spits which are always turning. Surely, good breeding and courtesy are born of the tavern, for the tavern is full of bowings, of *signor si* and *signor no*. And the great Turk is never obeyed as is one who dines in a tavern. If taverns were placed beside perfume jars, the civet itself would stink by comparison. O sweet, O gentle, O divine music which comes from those frying pans, trimmed with thrushes, with partridges and with capons! What a consolation you bring my soul! Who doubts that, if I were not always hungry, I should be always sleepy, hearing this music which resounds through the tavern? It is right sweet, but it is not as sweet as the tavern itself, and the reason is this: in a tavern there is no weeping, in a tavern there is no sighing, and in a tavern there is no remorse. And if that Caesar who triumphed under those arches which we see here and there had triumphed in a well-ordered tavern, his soldiers would have adored him, even as I adore these lampreys. I never fought with anyone in my life (so far as I can remember), but for a single lamprey I would commit murder with Bevilacqua; and I am not at all envious when I see one of my fellow grooms come into the inheritance of a thousand *scudi*, but my soul flies into my teeth when I behold Sire Cordial munching a

lamprey. And now, I am going to look for the tailor, for my master will want to dress up tomorrow, or I am a big clown.

(He goes out. Maco and Andrea come in.)

And. You are dressed up like a paladin, with that cloak.

Maco. You make me laugh, you do, indeed.

And. Your Lordship has well in mind what I have taught him?

Maco. I can cope with the world, I can.

And. Why don't you play the duke a little, as every knave does who would be taken for a Cardinal in disguise?

Maco. Like this, with my cloak up to my face?

And. Yes, Signor.

Maco. Alas, that I should have fallen through not knowing how to play the Duke in the dark.

And. Brace yourself, my fine ninny.

Maco. Give a couple of looks at my mantilla, if you want me to play the Duke. You know that I have made a vow to rise in the world.

And. And you did quite right. Now, how do you reply to the Signori?

Maco. *Signor si, and Signor no.*

And. Right gallant. And to the Signore?

Maco. I kiss your hand.

And. Good, And to friends?

Maco. Yes, in faith.

And. Right gentle. And to prelates?

Maco. I swear to God.

And. And how do you give commands to servants?

Maco. Bring me my mule, lead me my cloak, sweep the bed and make the room, or by the body of Heaven I'll beat you to death.

(Grillo comes in.)

Grillo. I heard what you said, master. Maestro Andrea, give me some instructions, for I don't want to associate with such big beasts as these.

MACO. I have no doubt, Grillo, that I shall end by making you a Courtier.

GRILLO. I am quite reassured.

AND. Suppose we go have a look at the *Campo Santo*, the obelisk, St. Peter's, the pine wood, the Banchi and the Tower of Nona.

MACO. Does the Tower of Nona ever ring for vespers?

AND. Yes, when they pull the rope.

MACO. *Cazzia.*[1]

AND. We will go then to the Ponte Sisto and through all the alleys of Rome.

MACO. And is there, then, an alley through all Rome?

AND. And through all Italy.

MACO. What church is this?

AND. St. Peter's. Enter with devotion.

MACO. *Laudamus te, benedicimus te.*

AND. That's the way.

MACO. *Et in terra pax bonae voluntatis.* I enter. Come, Maestro. *Osanna in excelsis.*

(*They go out. Rosso comes in.*)

ROSSO. Adventures follow me as sorrows did the one who was mad over Beatrice. I do not speak of the ten *scudi* I have gained nor of the lampreys stolen from the Fisherman, for they are nothing. But there has come to me, thanks to God and my own good deportment, so great a fate that I would not change places with the Bishop. The Signor, my master, is enamoured, and he keeps as close a watch over his love as he does over his pocketbook. Some days ago I overheard him talking to himself and sighing and saw him standing all thoughtful-like, and I perceived that Cupid had made anatomy of his heart. Two or three times, I would have opened my mouth to say, "What is the matter, master?" but I decided to keep still. And then, what do you think happened? Last night I (who am as presumptuous as a

[1]Untranslatable exclamation.

Friar at precession) going through the house, put my ear to the door of the master's room, and standing there, I heard him muttering in his sleep, and it seemed that he was at conclusions with his lady love. He was saying: "Livia, I am dying; Livia, I am burning up; Livia, I am in a spasm." And then, with a long rigmarole, he went on commending himself to her most foolishly. Then, changing his conversation, he said: "Oh Luzio, how happy you are to have the pleasure of so beautiful a lady"; and coming back to Livia, after he had exclaimed, "My soul, my heart, dear blood, sweet hope, etc.", I heard such a great shaking of the bedstead that I thought the Hungarians were on us. And when I returned to my own bed, chewing the thing over in my fancy, I tried to think of playing a joke on him which would enable me to get what I wanted from his hands. And here, I had almost forgotten it, being so busy with my own amusement, in making sport of the Fisherman and in eating with Cappa the lampreys in the most reverend tavern. And now the case is this: I shall go find Alvigia, who would corrupt chastity itself, for without her nothing can be done, and with her aid I shall set myself to the magnanimous enterprise of assassinating the old ass, the big wretch, and the arch blockhead of a Signor Mio. Those poltroons, the *gran maestri*, believe that everything depends on being loved by duchesses and queens; and for this reason, it will be easier for me to pull the wool over his eyes than it would be to come upon evil at court. And now, away to find Alvigia. Oh what a feast day this is going to be!

(*He goes out. Parabolano comes in.*)

PAR. This living in the world is a strange madness. When I was in a low state, the spurs of ambition always pricked my flank, and now that I am what might be called fortunate, such a strange fever torments me that neither stones nor herbs nor words can lessen it. O love

what can you not do? Surely, nature felt an envy against the peace of mortals when she created you, the irremediable scourge of men and Gods. And what good is it to me, Fortune, to be your friend, if love has taken that heart which, thanks to you, was in Heaven and placed it in the abyss? What is there for me to do except to weep and sigh, in the guise of a woman for a woman? I shall go back to my room which I have just left, and perhaps there I shall find a way out, the same way which thousands of other unfortunate lovers have found.

(*He goes out. Enter Flamminio and Sempronio.*)

FLAM. What is your idea in putting Camillo to Court?

SEM. So that he may learn there virtues and good manners and by such means be able to come into some little useful reputation.

FLAM. Good manners and virtues at Court? Oho!

SEM. In my day, virtues and good manners were not to be found anywhere but at Court.

FLAM. In your day, asses kept school. You old men, you always follow the rules of ancient times, and we are living in modern times. I swear it by a hundred pair of devils.

SEM. What's this I hear?

FLAM. The gospel truth, Sempronio.

SEM. Can it be that the world has gone to the dogs so soon?

FLAM. The world has found it easier to do evil than to do good, that is all I have to say to you.

SEM. I am translated, I am amazed.

FLAM. If you want more light on the subject, tell me about the goodness of your times, and I will tell you a part of the sorrows of mine, for to tell you all would be too great an undertaking.

SEM. To it, then. In my day, scarcely anyone arrived in Rome but a patron was found for him at once; and according to his age, condition, and his own desires, he

was given an office, a room for himself, a bed and a groom; the patron paid for his horse, the laundress, the barber, the doctor and medicines; and once or twice a year, he was given a new suit of clothes; and whenever benefices fell vacant, they were divided honorably, and everyone was remunerated in such a manner that throughout the household no complaint was ever heard. Everyone took delight in letters or music, and the expense was paid by the master.

FLAM. Really?

SEM. They lived together in so much love and charity that no inequality of nations was known, and it appeared that all were of one father and one mother; and each one rejoiced in the welfare of his comrade as he did in his own. In case of sickness, one waited upon another, as the religious do.

FLAM. Is there any more to tell?

SEM. That will be enough. The love I had for a life at Court did not deceive me.

FLAM. Hear, then, my reasons, Courtier of Papa Janni. In my day there came to Rome one full of all the qualities which are to be desired in a Courtier. And before they would receive him even in the servants' hall, he might have gone to Paradise. In my day, one groom was enough for two. How is it possible that half a man should serve a whole man? In my day, five or six persons were lodged in one room, ten feet long and eight wide; and he who did not like to sleep on the ground had to buy a bed or rent one. In my day, horses became chameleons, if you did not provide the corn and hay out of your own purse. In my day, you sold your own household goods to dress yourself, and he who had none of his own went a poor and naked Philosopher. In my day, so soon as anyone fell sick in his master's service, it was regarded as a great favor to find a place

for him in Santo Spirito.[1] In my day, laundresses and barbers were paid by *nos otros*. And the benefices which fell vacant in my day were given to one who had not been at Court at all, or else were divided up into so many pieces that each was not worth a ducat; and yet, we were better off than the Pope, if that ducat had not had to be lawyered over for ten years. In my day, masters were not paid to teach virtue, but he who taught it at his own expense was persecuted as an enemy; for the Signori do not want about them persons more learned than themselves. And in my day, we ate together, one with the other, and we fell upon our bread and wine with a greater hatred than highwaymen show to one who keeps them out of his house.

SEM. If things are like this, Camillo shall stay with me.

FLAM. Let him stay with you, if you do not wish to send him to Court to become a knave.

SEM. How, knave?

FLAM. Knave is an old story; for the least theft the Court ever did was to steal twenty-four years from the life of a good and gentle man like Messer Vincenzio Bovio, who for having grown old in service did not draw as a reward two suits of mourning clothes, even. He who doubts such things will soon learn that he has nothing to expect from his patrons; for only the ignorant, the plebeian, parasites and ruffians win advancement. After knave comes traitor. What more? With a hypocritic shuffling of feet, which with them is incurable, they overlook even homicides.

SEM. Let's speak of something else.

FLAM. But surely, the cruelty of Courts is incomprehensible, and it is true, moreover, that one at Court desires nothing so much as the death of this one or that one among his fellows; and if it happens that he himself escapes, as soon as he has obtained a benefice, he feels

[1] That is, in the public hospital.

all the stomach-turnings, all the side-aches, and all the fevers of the others. And it is a most evil thing to long for the death of one who has never offended you.

SEM. That is the truth.

FLAM. Listen to this. Our patrons provided a meal for us once a day, alleging that two meals were homicidal; and so, each one pretended to make an evening collation *solus peregrinus* in his room. And this they did not so much to appear sober as to chase away a few virtuous ones who might have come intruding at their table.

SEM. Yet they tell miracles of the Medici.

FLAM. One garland does not make a Spring.

SEM. That's true.

FLAM. And it is enough to make you split with laughing when they lock themselves in secret under pretense of studying. Ha, ha, ha!

SEM. Why do you laugh?

FLAM. Because they stand in conclave *utriusque sexus* and pretend to read Philosophy. But suppose we speak of the splendor of their repast. The cook of the Ponzetta, making of three eggs an omelet for two persons, in order that the omelets may appear bigger, puts them into those bands where the priests keep their barrettas and stretches them on rungs dirtier than the cloak on the neck of Gulilian Leno; and then comes the wind, and they toss them in the air so that they fall on the heads of the nations in the guise of diadems.

SEM. Ha, ha, ha!

FLAM. The steward of Malfetta (that prodigious prelate who, dying of hunger, left so many thousands of ducats to Leo) having spent four farthings too much on a shad, was constrained by the Reverend Monsignor to report to him; whereupon those in the house made up the money to pay for the shad, and when they were seated at table to enjoy it together, the Bishop, at-

tracted by the odor, came running up, saying: "Where's my share? Leave some for me!"

SEM. Ha, ha, ha!

FLAM. I have heard, but these are not my own words, that the *rivisore* of Santa Maria, in the portico, used to measure the soup to his household, and he even counted the mouthfuls, giving so many for white days and so many for black.

SEM. Ha, ha, ha!

FLAM. But I have forgotten. In my day, men were masters of the house, and in our day, the masters of the house are the women.

SEM. How, the women?

FLAM. The women, I tell you. In the house of—I don't want to tell you who it was—it is said that the mothers of some Cardinal or other water the wine, pay salaries, hunt the servants and do everything. And whenever the most reverend sons are disorderly in their *coitus* or their eating, they are treated to dog-like rebuffs. And the father of a certain great prelate draws the revenues of his Monsignor son and gives the latter so much a month to live on.

SEM. My God, I understand. It is better then to be in the Inferno than at Court nowadays.

FLAM. A hundred times better; for in the Inferno, the soul is tormented, but at Court soul and body.

SEM. We shall speak of this again. In the meanwhile, I am resolved to choke Camillo with my own hands rather than let him go to Court. And now, I want to go to the bank of Agostino Chigi to draw my salary. *Addio.*

(They go out. Rosso and Alvigia come in.)

ROSSO. Where are you going in such fury?

ALV. Here and there in tribulation.

ROSSO. Oh, in tribulation? One who governs Rome?

ALV. No, but you see, my mistress . . .

ROSSO. What is the matter with your mistress?

Alv. She is on fire.
Rosso. Who the devil set her on fire?
Alv. Alas, a misfortune.
Rosso. What has she done?
Alv. Nothing.
Rosso. Do they set folks on fire for nothing then?
Alv. It's only a drop of poison which she gave to her Godfather out of love for her Godmother, and this is the reason Rome is going to lose such a fine old lady.
Rosso. People don't know how to take jokes.
Alv. She threw a little girl baby into the river which a certain lady friend of hers had given birth to, as her habit is.
Rosso. These are words.
Alv. She put some kind of beans on a stair and made a jealous lover break his neck.
Rosso. A pistachio would have been no joke.
Alv. My, but you're a straight-speaking man. And so she left me heir to all she has.
Rosso. That's fine. But what did she leave you, if you don't mind telling me?
Alv. Alembics for distilling herbs grown in the light of the new Moon, waters for washing away freckles, ointments for removing spots from the face, an ampulla of lover's tears, oil for reviving . . . I don't want to tell you.
Rosso. Tell me, foolish girl.
Alv. Flesh . . .
Rosso. What flesh?
Alv. On the . . . you understand.
Rosso. On the . . . ?
Alv. Yes.
Rosso. Aha!
Alv. She left me bands for my breasts, which are pendulous, she left me an electuary against pregnancy and childbed; she left me a flask of maiden's wine.

Rosso. What's that good for?

Alv. It is good for mothers on fast days and is especially good for marchionesses. She left me the rope of one who was wrongly hanged, powder for killing jealous men, incantations for producing madness, prayers for producing sleep and recipes for rejuvenation. She left me also a spirit confined—

Rosso. Where?

Alv. In a thunder-mug.

Rosso. Ha, ha!

Alv. What do you mean, ha, ha, big stupid? In a thunder-mug, I tell you, and it is a familiar spirit that knows how to find stolen property and tells you whether your lady friend loves you or not. It is called Il Folletto; and she left me an unguent which carries me above wind and water to the walnut tree of Benevento.

Rosso. God give your soul all she has left you.

Alv. God will do it.

Rosso. Don't weep; weeping won't help.

Alv. I am in despair, my heart is breaking; it is not a thousand years ago that she was drinking six kinds of wine at the Pavone, always from the decanter and without a thought of any reputation in the world.

Rosso. God bless her, for at least she wasn't one of those refuse-a-drops.

Alv. There never was an old lady who was so healthy an eater and so light a worker.

Rosso. You don't say.

Alv. At the butcher's, at the delicatessen keeper's, at the baker's, at the stove, at the fair, at the Ponte Santa Maria, at the Ponte Quattro Capre and at the Ponte Sisto, folks always, always stopped to talk to her, and she was regarded as a Solomon, a Sybil, and a Chronicle by constables, innkeepers, porters, cooks, friars and all the world; and she would stalk like a dragon among the gallows, cutting out the eyes of hanged men, and

like a female paladin through the cemeteries, tearing off the claws of the dead on some fine midnight.

Rosso. And so Death wanted her for his own.

Alv. And what a conscience was hers! On the eve of Pentecost she would not eat meat. On Christmas eve she fasted on bread and wine, and in Lent, beyond a few fresh eggs, she led the life of a lady hermit.

Rosso. In short, every day she ought to have been hanged and burned; she was neither a good man nor a good woman.

Alv. You speak evil, but you speak the truth.

Rosso. If they had plugged up her ears and made a sign on her forehead, she might have gone on living.

Alv. So she might, and she might now be wearing the mitre which she wore three years ago on the day of St. Peter Martyr; and she would just as soon ride on the ass as on the cart; and she was not at all concerned with the paintings on the mitre, so the neighbors could not say she did it out of vain glory.

Rosso. He who is humble shall be exalted.

Alv. Poor woman, she was the sworn sister of the priests of good wine, God knows.

Rosso. That was another sin of hers.

Alv. And so it was.

Rosso. And now let's leave these sorrowful things and speak of pleasant ones, for as soon as you give the word, we shall be out of the mud. My master is all minced chicken[1] for Livia, the wife of Livio.

Alv. He ought to look a little higher.

Rosso. And while he tried to keep his love secret, he has revealed it to me.

Alv. How?

Rosso. In a dream.

Alv. Aha! Tell me right away.

Rosso. I gave him to understand, pretending to know noth-

[1] *pollo pesto.*

ing of his secret, that Livia was so bestially inflamed for him that she had been forced to confide in you, and that you are her nurse.

Alv. I get you. No more words. Come on, let's get them on the turf.[1]

Rosso. You get my meaning better than the rump of one who has taken a pill.

Alv. Come on, foolish lad.

Rosso. One kiss, queen of queens. (*He attempts to kiss her.*)

Alv. Let me go, silly!

(*They go out. Maco and Andrea, who have just come from St. Peter's, come in.*)

Maco. Where do those big bronze pines come from?

And. From the pine wood of Ravenna.

Maco. Whose ship is that with the suffocating saints?

And. Musaico's.

Maco. Where do they make those obelisks?

And. At Pisa.

Maco. That *Campo Santo* is full of dead men, you mean to tell me?

And. I don't know.

Maco. I have a thirst.

And. God be praised, you've taken the word out of my mouth.

Maco. *Venite, adoremus.*

(*They go out. Parabolano comes in.*)

Par. Shall I be silent? Or shall I speak? In silence is my death, and in speech is her disdain, since when I write her how much I love her, she is likely to hold it a vile thing to be loved by so base a person; and if I restrain my fire, the concealing of so great a passion will be the death of me.

(*Valerio comes in*).

Val. Not to employ the presumption of a courtier, but to

[1] *vieni dietro, che la farem andar al palio.* Cf our "let's get going!"

fulfill the office of a faithful servant, I should like to know the reason of your languishment and to find the remedy with my own blood, if needs be.

PAR. Is that you, Valerio?

VAL. It is I, who, perceiving that love does to you what it does to every gentle person, desire to know everything in order that my faith may be an aid to your desires.

PAR. You do not understand.

VAL. If I do not understand, why hide it from me, who hold your contentment more dear than the eyes in my own head? And if it is Love, are you so lacking in spirit as to place difficulties in the way of enjoying a lady? If that is the case, what should they do who, being in love, are as poor in everything as you are most rich?

PAR. If the plasters of wise words could cure another's pain, you would have healed my own.

VAL. Alas, *Signor mio*, rid yourself of such a novel error, and do not suffer those who envy your greatness to rejoice in your affliction; for when the rumor of the melancholy which consumes you spreads, what joy will your friends have, what benefit your servants, and what glory your country?

PAR. Let us suppose I were in love, what remedy would you suggest?

VAL. That you find a procuress.

PAR. And then?

VAL. By means of her, send a letter to the one you love so much.

PAR. And if she will have none of it?

VAL. Neither letters nor presents are refused by women.

PAR. What would you have me write her?

VAL. Whatever love dictates.

PAR. If she takes me for a bad man?

VAL. For a bad man? Oh, they are not so cruel. There was a time already when one had to think ten years about getting a word, and to get a letter to his mistress had

to resort even to necromancy and, finally, concealing his identity, was forced to cling to roofs at the peril of breaking his neck, or to stand a day and a night in some cold cellar in the heart of winter, or under a mountain of hay when the world was burning up with heat; and the sound of a foot, a fart, a cat, a nothing was enough to ruin everything. Not to speak of those rope ladders which make my hair stand on end to think of them.

PAR. What do you mean to imply by that?

VAL. I mean to imply that now one enters by the door, in the light of day, and lovers are so lucky that they are even shown courtesies by husbands. For war, plague, famine and these times, which are inclined toward pleasure, have made a whore out of all Italy, to such an extent that cousins and relatives, brothers and sisters mingle indiscriminately, without any shame or conscience in the world. And if it were not for my blushes, I could give you the names of as many guilty ones as there are hairs in your head. No, Signor, do not despair of attaining your desire, for you have more right to hope for it than the Scourge of Princes[1] had to hope for the courtesy of the Emperor's general in Italy.

PAR. This security you offer does not diminish my pain in the least.

VAL. You have but to revive that ardor which in the past has brought you through the most difficult enterprises. Let us go home and think of some manner of dispatching the letter, and perhaps I shall be able to add a few amorous lines in your favor.

PAR. Come then, for neither at home nor abroad is there any peace for my heart.

(They go out. Andrea comes in.)

AND. While Master Dunce was drinking, he fell enamoured of Camilla Pisana, having caught a glimpse of her from

[1] Aretino himself, of course.

a window of his room. This is once when Cupid becomes a doctor, that is, a blockhead. And it would make a weeping man laugh to hear him improvising over her; he has all the style of the Abbott of Gieta, crowned on an elephant; he has composed a number of the most awful verses that were ever heard, so awful that Cinotto and Casto da Bologna and even Marco da Lodi are Virgils and Homers by the side of him; and if any other proof were needed, this letter in prose would give it. I'm going to see what the old baboon has written to Signora Camilla.

Letter of Messer Maco

Salve Regina, have mercy on us, for your odoriferous eyes and your marble forehead, which distills a mellifluous manna, have so slain me that, therefore and thusly, gold and pearls subtract me to love you. And there were never seen anywhere erst such cheeks of emerald and hair of milk and purple which lithesomely disport themselves with your little bosom, where lodge two breasts in the guise of harmonious melons. And I have come here to make me a Cardinal, and then a Courtier, by your leave. Therefore, choose the time and name the place, so that I may be able to tell you the cruelty my heart feels, which will be comforted in the liquid crystal of your little sweetbread mouth, et fiat voluntas tua, *for* omnia vincit Amor.

Maco is all minced chicken over you,
So do your duty, and do it quickly too.

These words would turn the stomach of a friar who was used to eating barrettas; and what is this written underneath? Can it be that God has turned his world contrary? Now, who would ever believe that out of Sienna, a good, noble, and courteous city and one filled with genius, should have come such a great blockhead as Messer Maco? It breaks my heart to think he comes from so splendid a province. For, not to speak of the

famous men who have lived there and live there yet, its two Academies, *la Grande* and *la Intronata*, have made poetry beautiful and given the language a new gentility. I was astonished to hear what Jacopo Eterno, who in letters Greek, Latin, and Vulgate displays the highest excellence, had to tell me of this yesterday. But there are madmen everywhere, though there is none worse than this snail-sheller who has set out to get himself canonized as a fool. Here he comes now.

(*Enter Maco.*)

MACO. With whom are you confabulating, Maestro?

AND. With your stupidity.

MACO. With my Poetry?

AND. *Signor, si.*

MACO. What do you think of it?

AND. *Caecus non iudicat de coloris.*

MACO. Take this little Roundelay again; read it in a loud voice.

AND. By your leave.

O star of love, O angel of my garden,
Face of wood and visage oriental,
I am a ship, begging your pardon,
Braving at night a tempest temperamental:
Your beauty comes from France, I swear,
Like that of Giuda who was strangled,
For love of you I will a Courtier be,
Such love as mine I never did see.

MACO. What do you say to it?

AND. Oh what sententious verses, full, slippery, gentle, learned, sweet, sharp, pleasant, bright, clear, agreeable, terse, sonorous, novel, and divine.

MACO. They astonish you, eh?

AND. They astonish me, translate me, and drive me to despair; but there is a false Latinity in them.

MACO. Which one? The one about the ship?

AND. Yes.

MACO. That's a poetic license, is it not?

AND. The fact of a horse does not depend on the cruppers, you mean to say?

MACO. Yes, master. And now, I must off to my lady-love.

(He goes out.)

AND. I am of the opinion that this fellow, being a dunce, a very rich simpleton and a twenty-four carat clown, will end up by becoming the favorite of this Court. It was wisely that Giannozzo Pandolfini exclaimed: "I am happy to be praised by Leo as a madman," implying that with Princes one must be mad, feign madness and live the life of a madman. Messer Gimignano da Modena, the Doctor, was wise when, desiring to win a suit at Mantua from Giannino da Correggio, who had as much right in equity as the Doctor had in law, he played the part of the hedgebill in front of the Duke. We may make up our minds, then, to believe that one cannot do a greater injury to a Signor than by spreading the report that he is a wise man. And now, coming back to our Poet, he is first to become a Cardinal. Then, to find Zoppino and bring him to the Master as an ambassador to the Signora. Zoppino will congratulate him over his marvelous letter and that stupendous Roundelay.

(He goes out. Rosso comes in.)

ROSSO. Alvigia, eh? Oh what a trimming! She has more spirit than Desiderio who, while he was being torn with red-hot pincers, kept on smiling; suppose she had said, "I don't want to," "I can't," or, "I'm afraid of the risk in betraying so great a personage"? But she understood me before I told her how things were. She's put me on the right track. We shall see her going to the Signor with Livia's message. There's Parabolano now. Oh what a face! He looks like one who is hungry and ashamed to eat in the servant's hall. God content him.

(*Parabolano comes in.*)

PAR. Only death can content me, for these women, who flee when one pursues them and pursue when one flees them, will be the death of me yet.

ROSSO. Don't despair.

PAR. I will despair. I wish God would transform you into me and me into you.

ROSSO. Oh Christ, what a thing to say, and why don't you do us the favor?

PAR. You would not want me to do so, if you knew how I feel.

ROSSO. Those are words.

PAR. They are not.

ROSSO. And now, I am going to tell you something that would cheer a priest's servant.

PAR. Alas!

ROSSO. Smile a little or I will repent of my intentions. You sneer most meagerly. Look at me. One of the most gentle, richest and most beautiful (what more do you want?) women on this earth is so love-sick over your Lordship that, to keep from dying, she has revealed her love to her Nurse, and her Nurse out of compassion has told me.

PAR. Tell me who she is.

ROSSO. No, you must divine it.

PAR. Does her name commence with an A?

ROSSO. No, Signor.

PAR. With a G?

ROSSO. You're wrong.

PAR. With an N?

ROSSO. You're cold.

PAR. With an S?

ROSSO. You're as far-off as the man in the moon.

PAR. With a B?

ROSSO. I see I shall have to tell you.

PAR. Tell away.

Rosso. Do you know your A B C's?
Par. By God, I hope so.
Rosso. That's a miracle.
Par. Why?
Rosso. Because you Lords are not in the habit of delighting in such pedagogicalisms. And now say over your A B C's, and when you come to that letter which is the one her name begins with, I will tell you; otherwise, I'll never be able to remember. Begin.
Par. A B C D E F G: is it one of those?
Rosso. Go on.
Par. Where was I?
Rosso. In the A B C's. Collect your wits.
Par. A B C D E F G H I K.
Rosso. Steady now, you're coming to it. Proceed.
Par. M N O.
Rosso. What would you say to an L?
Par. Ah, Rosso, divine, celestial, immortal!
Rosso. That's all right; compose a book in my honor.
Par. So it's my Livia.
Rosso. Was I right, or wasn't I?
Par. Where am I?
Rosso. In Emmaus.
Par. Am I asleep?
Rosso. Yes, you're just calling me out of the servant's hall.
Par. Let's go home, honored Rosso.
Rosso. A little while ago I was a traitor.
Par. That's not so.

(*They go out. Andrea and Zoppino come in.*)

And. Of all the jokes that ever were, there never was one like this.
Zopp. I shall tell him that the Signora Camilla has sent me to him, and that if it were not out of respect to Don Diego di Lainis, who out of jealousy keeps a watch on her house, he might come to her in his own garb, but

that for this reason, it is necessary that he come dressed as a porter. Be quiet, the blockhead appears. What a good time fools have.

(*Maco comes in.*)

The Signora Camilla, my mistress, kisses the hand of your Lordship.

MACO. They tell me she's ill over me; is that true?

ZOPP. I cannot tell you how ill.

MACO. If she gives me a son, I'll pay for the cradle.

AND. You think so?

ZOPP. Now that I see him close up, I think she spoke the truth when she said he would be the death of her.

MACO. How many kisses did she give my letter?

ZOPP. Oh, more than a thousand!

MACO. Gluttoness! Traitress! And the Roundelay, what did she do with it?

ZOPP. She put it up on the wall.

MACO. By the hand of whom?

ZOPP. By the hand of her tailor. And now she's going to replace the poet laureate who curries her horses and give drinks and hay to the asinine Pegasus, instead; so you'll have plenty of manure to regale yourself with.

MACO. I made it up out of my head.

ZOPP. Oh what a madman!

MACO. I am I.

AND. You do yourself all possible honor.

MACO. O you, who come from the Signora, do you know what I'm going to say to you?

ZOPP. No, Signor.

MACO. When I get the next batch of honey cakes and sweetbreads from Sienna, I'm going to give you a couple.

AND. Didn't I tell you, he was liberal as a Pope or an Emperor? And now, let's go plan the means of sending this gentleman to the Signora.

MACO. Let's hurry. Oh, Grillo, Grillo, come to the window.

(*Grillo appears at a window.*)

GRILLO. What do you want?

MACO. Nothing. Yes, I do. Oh, Grillo.

GRILLO. Here I am. What do you want?

MACO. I've forgotten.

AND. Enter, Signor Zoppino.

ZOPP. You first, your Highness.

AND. I beg your Highness, you first.

ZOPP. No, your Highness must go first.

MACO. I'll go first myself; you follow me.

(*They all go out. Rosso comes in.*)

ROSSO. All the titles which were given by Norcia and by Todi to their ambassadors, Rosso's master has given him. He wants to make me rich, right off, to give me a place in the world; he wants me to advise, govern and command him. Run up an alley, you who only know how to make pretty reverences, with a platter in your hand or, it may be, a well-washed beaker, and to speak on the tips of your wooden shoes, entertaining the Signori by composing music and poems in their honor, thinking thereby to get into their graces. You don't know your business. To take affairs in hand, that is the whole thing; and when things begin to fall into the master's mouth, he will carry you in the crupper all over Rome; he will caress you, flatter you and load you with gifts. Look at this barretta with a medallion and with the egrets of *aurum sitisti* which he has given me as a sign of his love. But I must go fetch Alvigia. If this hoax is discovered, I am lost. But I know all the brothels in Italy and outside of Italy, and the Calendar which finds the feast days of the year will not be able to find me. But I don't think we shall be found out, for the master has more business on his hands than a tradesman.

(*He goes out. Andrea and Zoppino come in.*)

And. We cannot do any better than to dress Grillo in his clothes and him in a Burgamask habit.

Zopp. And when he comes to the Signora's door, in those clothes, I will pretend to believe that he is a porter and ask him if he wants to carry a dead one to the Campo Santo. You will appear then and urge him to do it. And Grillo will pretend not to know him.

And. *Benissimo.*

Zopp. In the meanwhile, I shall tell him there has gone out an order for the arrest of a certain Messer Maco, who is being sought by the Sheriff. You have all his friends there; I shall be close at hand, and you may leave the rest to me.

(*Zoppino goes out. Grillo comes in, dressed in his master's clothes, and Maco in those of a porter.*)

And. Come on out. Ha, ha, ha!

Grillo. How do I look in velvet?

Maco. How do I look, Maestro?

And. Ha, ha! Ho, ho! A navigation chart wouldn't recognize you. And now, keep your wits about you, and if you see anyone, pretend that you have come to carry a trunk of the Signora's; and if you don't see anyone, go on in the house, attend to your business, and don't let your imagination run away with you.

Maco. It seems to me like a thousand years, it does.

And. Follow him, Grillo, a little way behind, and if any ruffian meets him, step in front so that it will seem you are Messer Maco and that Messer Maco is the porter. In that way we shall not be suspected.

Maco. Stay close to me and see to it that some Spanish gentleman doesn't break me in pieces. Alas! Look at that one. I'm afraid, I'm trembling.

And. Don't be afraid. Go on. Oh what a subtle gallows-bird is this Zoppino. From his gestures, the way he struts and wears his cloak and sword, you would swear he was a very by-God to the life.

(*Zoppino comes in.*)

ZOPP. Do you want to carry a dead one to the Campo Santo?

MACO I'm a dead one already.

ZOPP. Just because bread is cheap, you beggars don't want to work.

MACO. I don't want to do any work except carry the Signora's trunk.

AND. Serve this gentleman, porter.

MACO. Don't you recognize me, Maestro?

AND. A cancer take you! Who are you?

MACO. O God, I'm lost! I'm translated in these clothes! Grillo, am I not your master? By God, I won't stand for that, *pesas dios;* I'll have you flogged.

ZOPP. Let the ass alone. I'll see that he carries it if he splits. An order has just gone out that whoever knows the whereabouts of one Maco Sanese, who has come to Rome without a passport as a spy, should report it at once to the Governor under pain of death, and it is thought they are going to have him castrated.

GRILLO. *Oimè!*

AND. Don't be afraid. We'll put your clothes on this porter, and the Sheriff, thinking he is Messer Maco, will take him and castrate him in your place.

MACO. I am a porter! I am a porter, and not Messer Maco. Help me! help me! (*He runs out.*)

ZOPP. Take him! Stop him! He's a spy! He's a deceiver! Ha, ha! Run after him, Grillo, and see that he doesn't get into trouble. It will be good sport to see him strutting like an absurd fop among the Banchi with a throng of ragamuffins at his heels howling over the joke.

(*End of Act Second*)

ACT THIRD

(*Parabolano and Valerio come in.*)

PAR. What if Rosso plays a jest on me and slanders me with Cappa?

VAL. If to be praised by such a man does not help, to be blamed by him cannot hurt. I grant Rosso is not to be praised as the splendor of all virtue.

PAR. I praise the splendor of my own welfare, and not a servant for his solicitousness in making my bed or his diligence in brushing my clothes; who brings me word of what all my household say about me and splits my head with music and with poetry, exhorting me and encouraging me to make a present to this one and to that one. You understand me?

VAL. As for me, I've always performed the offices of a good servant and of one who loves your honor, and I would hold it dearer to be blamed for this than to be praised for having laid before you anything that was unworthy of your rank and of mine. But it is a vice common to all the Signori not to want to listen to the truth.

PAR. Keep still, keep still, I tell you.

VAL. I am a plain man, and I speak freely.

PAR. Come on and keep quiet.

(*They go out. Rosso and Alvigia come in.*)

ROSSO. There's the master now. See with what a gruff visage he regards the Heavens. He crosses his hands, bites his finger and scratches his head. He looks like a blasphemer at heart.

ALV. That's a sign he's in love.

ROSSO. Oh what big beasts are these Latin hearts, always

murmuring about their princesses. I think it's a foolish labor to try to make[1] a gentle lady, and that those who boast of having spoken with this Signora or that are having sport in the privy when all is said.

ALV. Certainly, it is a labor; not that they are not all of one stripe, and that they do not all like it well enough; but this one is restrained by fear, this one by shame, this one from fear of being seen and this one from sheer laziness. And so, no one ever gets their love except some groom or some household steward, simply because this is more convenient.

Rosso. And the pedants, too, pick off a few;[2] and they frequently put the burden on the husbands of their mistresses.

ALV. Aha! The Signor has seen us.

(Parabolano comes in.)

PAR. Well met, you two.

Rosso. This lady, *Signor mio*, has come to hand you a bit of Heaven.

PAR. You are my Angel's nurse?

ALV. I am your servant and the nurse of her to whom you are life, soul, heart and hope. Although the love I bear her will end by sending me to the hot-house . . .

PAR. Why, reverend *madre mia?*

ALV. Because honor is the treasure of the world; but I want to see my mistress and little daughter, Livia, go on living. And so it pleases her to send me to your Lordship and beg your Lordship to deign to be loved by her. But who would not be enamoured of so gentle a Signor?

PAR. I am on my knees to hear you. (*He drops to his knees.*)

ALV. That's too much, Signor.

PAR. I am only doing my duty.

Rosso. Get up; those Neapolitan manners of yours are a bore to everybody nowadays.

[1]In our slang sense. The original is *l'ottenere d'una*, etc.

[2]*Et i pedanti ancora ne vanno beccando qualch'una.*

PAR. Say on, honored mother. (*He rises.*)

ALV. I am ashamed to speak to such a *gran maestro* in such a petticoat as this.

PAR. This necklace will touch it up.

ROSSO. Didn't I tell you he thought no more of giving a hundred *scudi* than a lawyer does of stealing a thousand? (*He would choke a bedbug to drink its blood.*)

ALV. His face shows it.

ROSSO. He gives us a pile of clothes every year. (*Oh, if he would only pay us our back salaries!*)

ALV. You don't say. What a Signor!

ROSSO. And there is always carnival in his servants' hall. (*We are dying of hunger.*)

ALV. So everybody tells me.

ROSSO. We are all his comrades. (*He would rather die than show a good face to anyone.*)

ALV. As a *gran maestro* should.

ROSSO. He would even speak to the Pope on behalf of the least in his household. (*If he saw the halter on our necks, he wouldn't say a word.*)

ALV. I'll swear he wouldn't.

ROSSO. He shows us the love of a father. (*He wishes we would all die.*)

ALV. I believe you.

PAR. Rosso knows my nature.

ROSSO. And for that reason I praise you. And to think, Madonna Alvigia, that your ward has said the paternoster of San Giuliano to cure herself of him; and would you believe it, he does not deign to love any other but her, although he has half the women in Rome at his heels.

ALV. And he doesn't yield to them?

ROSSO. *Madre, no.*

PAR. I thank benign fortune that Livia loves me.

ROSSO. Live up to your fortune.

PAR. Tell me, my dear lady, what face does she put on when she speaks of me?
ALV. An imperial face.
PAR. How does she act?
ALV. Her actions would corrupt a hermit.
PAR. What promises does she make me?
ALV. Magnificent and large ones.
PAR. You think she's lying?
ALV. Lying?
PAR. Does she love another?
ALV. Another? Why, she suffers so much for you that she —she—
PAR. She shall never suffer on my account.
ALV. I hope to God she doesn't!
PAR. What is she doing at this moment?
ALV. She's cursing the day, which seems a thousand years long to her.
PAR. What does she care how long it is?
ROSSO. She cares so much that if she does not meet you this very night she will die.
PAR. Is this true what Rosso says?
ALV. So it is. She wants to die in case your Lordship denies her his grace. Come on, and I will explain everything. Look, Rosso, we are at your house.
PAR. Enter, *madre mia.*
ALV. Ah, *Signor mio,* don't make sport of me. Enter, your Lordship.
ROSSO. Content the Signor, old lady.
ALV. Anything to please you.

(*Parabolano and Alvigia go out. Maco, still dressed as a porter, comes in.*)

MACO. What do you advise me to do?
ROSSO. Go hang yourself, poltroon of a porter.
MACO. (*Panting*) I'm just getting my breath.
ROSSO. I'm sorry you don't choke.

Maco. The Sheriff is wrong in looking for me.
Rosso. What if you were wrongly sought by the Hangman as well as by the Sheriff?
Maco. Do you know the Signor Rapolano?
Rosso. What Rapolano?
Maco. That Signor who sent me the lampreys. Don't you recognize me?
Rosso. Are you Messer Maco?
Maco. Yes, ma'am, I mean, yes, sir.
Rosso. What are you doing in this silly get-up?
Maco. Maestro Andrea took me down to see the whores in disguise.
Rosso. The brains of all the Sanesi are of one stripe, like those of Priests and Friars.

(*Parabolano and Alvigia come in.*)

Par. What were you saying, Rosso?
Rosso. I was saying that this is your Messer Sanese, and he comes from the hands of that do-nothing of a Maestro Andrea, as you see.
Par. Body of God! I'll pay him for it.
Maco. Don't harm him, for the Sheriff is a traitor.
Par. Rosso, keep company with mother here. Come with me, Messer Maco.
Maco. Signor Rapolano, I commend myself to your Lordship.

(*Parabolano and Maco go out.*)

Rosso. Well.
Alv. Oh, but he is a great boaster!
Rosso. Ha, ha, ha!
Alv. Do you know what I'm wondering?
Rosso. Not I.
Alv. How he, who is dying for this Livia, can believe that she who has never seen him, in a manner of speaking, should be dying for him.
Rosso. You should not be astonished at that, for a Signor

like this, who was formerly chamberlain to ten dogs and is now drunk with his own grandeur, holds it as assured that all the world adores him; and if he could but see himself, he would want to lay hands on himself for having made love to Livia and thinking that she is obliged to run after the likes of him, as we have given him to understand.

Alv. Poor old hoot-owl! Nowadays, to tell you the truth, I feel like saying, "To hell with the world."[1] I have seen so many of its whims. In my day, neither Lorenzina nor Beatricicca nor Angioletta da Napoli nor Beatrice nor Madrema nor her Imperial Highness herself were fit to lace my shoes. Oh, the fashions, the masks, the fine houses, the bull fights, the cavalcades, the sables trimmed in gold, the parrots, the monkeys, and the chamberlains and maids by the tens—these were nothing to me. And Signori and Monsignori and ambassadors by the score. Ha, ha! I have to laugh when I think how we took his mitre away from a Bishop and put it on the head of one of my maids, making sport of the poor man. And a sugar merchant once left all his cases with me, and at my house for a long time after everything was spiced with sugar. Then I contracted a disease, the name of which was never known. We treated it for the syphilis, and I took so many medicines that I became an old woman and began to take rented rooms, selling first my rings, clothing and all the possessions of my youth, and then was reduced to washing fine shirts. So, I devoted myself to advising young girls not to do as I had done, you understand. But what was it I wanted to say?

Rosso. You were about to say that I have been a friar, a hostler's boy, a Jew at the customs house, a muleteer, a sheriff's mate, a galley slave, a miller (for love of the thing), a currier, a ruffian, a charlatan, a knave, a groom

[1] "*mondo fatti con Dio.*"

to scholars, a servant to Courtiers and now I am a Greek.

Alv. There was no malice in my fine discourse. I merely wanted to say that I have spent a number of years on my rump and I have never been in an undertaking like this before.

Rosso. For that reason, you ought to be obliged to me all the more, since it is going to be your last.

Alv. Why the last? Am I going to be killed in this adventure?

Rosso. Hardly. I say the last for the reason that women are no longer employed at court. It happens that, since it is not permitted to take a wife, one takes a husband; and in this fine fashion, each one gets his desire and still does not go against the law.

Alv. That court of yours is a brazen hussy. She wears the mitre and is not ashamed of it.

Rosso. Leave off your chronicles. What do you propose to do for my master?

Alv. Do you think I lack ways? You must take me for a simpleton!

Rosso. Tell me one.

Alv. The wife of Arcolano, the baker, is a good sort and a great crony of mine. I will have her come to our house and we will sneak her in in the dark.

Rosso. You have it.

Alv. How many gentle women do you think there are who look divine, thanks to their embroidered robes and their rouge, who are really most sad creatures? Togna (the wife of that baker I was telling you about) has flesh so white, so firm, so young and so clear that a Queen might be proud of it.

Rosso. Assuming that Togna was ugly and worthless, she still would appear an angel to the Signor. For the Signori have less taste than a dead man, and they always drink the worst wines and eat the most wicked

foods which are to be found, thinking they are the best and most precious.

ALV. We understand each other. Here is our little house. Return to the Signor and bring me his resolution, the hour of his coming and the necklace. The rest we will settle at our leisure.

ROSSO. Yes, yes, I'm off.

(They go out. Valerio and Flamminio come in.)

VAL. You've been in a great frenzy for the last hour. Why not continue with your service, for the fruit of a courtier's hope ripens in an unexpected manner.

FLAM. How can the fruit of my hope ripen when it has not yet put forth any flowers? When I look in the glass and see my white beard, tears come into my eyes from the pity I have for myself, who have nothing left to live for. Alas, unfortunate me! How many simpletons, how many grooms, how many ignorant ones and gluttons do I know who are rich, while I am a beggar? I have made up my mind to go elsewhere to die. It grieves my very soul when I think how I came here a young man and I am going away an old one; I came here clad, and I am going away naked; I came here contented, and I am going away in despair.

VAL. But what about your honors? Do you want to throw away the time you have spent, with so much faith and so much solicitude, in the service of the Court?

FLAM. It is that which pierces me.

VAL. Your patron loves you, and there will come a time when you will see that he has your interests at heart.

FLAM. At heart? Ha! If the Tiber ran milk, he would not let me dip my finger in it.

VAL. You imagine all that. But tell me, where are you going? To what land? With what Lord?

FLAM. The world is large.

VAL. It was large once; today it is so small that virtuous men are no longer to be found in it. I do not deny that

our Court is in a bad way; but in the end, everyone comes here and everyone lives here.

FLAM. Have it as you will; I want to go away.

VAL. Think it over well, and make up your mind, for there are no longer the times there used to be from one end of Italy to the other. Then, every land had real men at Court. At Naples the King, at Rome the Barons, as today we have the Medici at Florence, the Petrucci at Sienna, the Bentivogli at Bologna, the Rangoni at Modina, and then there was, above all, the Count Guido, who with his courtesy made every fine spirit rejoice in his gentleness; and then there was the magnanimous Signora Argentina, unique ray of modesty in this cursed century.

FLAM. I know what she is, and in addition to her noble virtues, I adore her for the great affection she bears to that fine soul, King Francis, and I hope to see, and that soon, Her Majesty in the enjoyment of that felicity which such a Lady, as all the world must see, deserves.

VAL. Let's come back to what we were talking about. Where will you go from here? To Ferrara? To do what? To Mantua? To say what? To Milan? To hope what? Take the advice of one who wishes you well and stay in Rome, for, if for no other reason than the example which the Court must take from the liberality of Ippolito da' Medici, that refuge of the virtuous, the good old days must come back again.

FLAM. Perhaps I shall go to Venice, where I already have been, and enrich my poverty with her liberty; for there, at least, poor men are not assassinated at the whim of any male or female favorite; for only in Venice does justice hold the scales with an even balance; there alone fear of disgrace does not force you to adore one who yesterday was a lousy wretch. Anyone who doubts her merits has but to regard the manner in which God exalts her. Surely, she is the Holy City and

the Terrestrial Paradise. The plying of her gondolas is a melodious accompaniment to leisure. What is a cavalcade? To ride in cavalcade is to spoil your heels, curse your grooms and break your bones.

VAL. You speak well; and moreover, life there is more secure and longer than it is elsewhere, but you will find that time hangs heavy on your hands.

FLAM. Why?

VAL. Since you will not have there the conversation of the virtuous.[1]

FLAM. You are ill-informed. The virtuous are there. At Venice there is personal gentility and at Rome rudeness and envy. Where is there another reverend friar like Francesco Giorgi, product of all the sciences? Happy would the Court be if God would inspire it to give him the rank which his merit deserves. And what do you think of the venerable Padre Damiano, who breaks marble hearts with his preaching, and who is the true interpreter of the Holy Scriptures? Did not I hear you yesterday speaking of Gasparo Contarino, the sun and life of Philosophy and of Greek and Latin studies, as well as the mirror of goodness and good manners?

VAL. I knew his Magnificence in Bologna, when he was the Ambassador of Caesar. Of the two reverend fathers I have heard mention, and I have seen Giorgi here in Rome.

FLAM. And who would not run post-haste to see the worthy Giambatista Memo, who has redeemed the mathematical sciences and who is truly a wise man?

VAL. I know him by reputation.

FLAM. You know by reputation also Bevazzano, for he was formerly a luminary among the learned ones of Rome; and I know that you have heard the name of the honored Capello. But why do I omit the great Trifon Gabrielli,

[1]This is the cue for Aretino to drag in a tiresome bit of log-rolling, in the style of his worst letters.

whose judgment is a lesson to nature and to art? And I understand there is to be found there, among the other fine spirits, Girolamo Quirini, all sense and grace, and that the world is astonished when it attempts to imitate the divine M. Vincenzio, his uncle, who honored his fatherland in life and Rome in death; and there is also Giralamo Molino, the favorite of the Muses. And who would not be happy listening to the pleasant inventions of Lorenzo Veniero?[1] What gentle conversation is that of Luigi Quirini, who, after his honors in the army, has adorned himself with those of the law! And I have been told by our Eurialo di Ascoli, who is also an Apollo, and by Pero, that in Venice there is Francesco Salamone, who, when he strikes his lyre, makes Orpheus ashamed.

VAL. So I have heard.

FLAM. I have been told by the good Molza that there are there two miraculous youths, Luigi Priuli and Marco Antonio Soranzo, who have reached the summit, not only of all there is to learn, but of all one might desire to know. And what a paragon of the courtier's art, of virtue and of judgment, is Monsignor Valerio, the complete gentleman, and Monsignor Brevio.

VAL. They are well-known in Rome.

FLAM. In Venice, moreover, there are virtuous manners and gentle entertainments. But the astonishing thing was to listen to the great Andrea Navagiero, who follows the arms of the good Bernardo; and I had forgotten Maffio Leone, another Demosthenes, another Cicero; without speaking of a thousand other noble geniuses who illuminate our century even as does Egnazio, who is today the sole support of Latin eloquence. And how history will honor him. Nor would you believe there was in Rome a Messer Giovanni Da Legge, cavalier

[1]Veniero, Aretino's secretary, the author of the *Puttana errante*. See Introduction.

and count of the Holy Cross, who showed at Bologna, with a wise liberality, the splendid generosity of his mind.

VAL. In short, if things are as you say, we others, aside from the *Accademia* of the Medici, are but a flock of infamous and starveling servants.

FLAM. I have not told you the half of it. To enlighten you further, the gentle Firenzuola tells me that there is there a certain Francesco Beretti, who is more valiant at improvising than those of us who deafen the ears of Pasquin. But putting to one side the Philosophers and the Poets, where is peace to be found if not in Venice? Where love, if not in Venice? Where abundance, where charity, if not in Venice? And to that mirror of sanctity the Bishop of Chieti, I may tell you, that father of humility and example of good religion, has repaired with his train for the welfare of their souls, spurning to the point of abhorrence this Rome of ours and the dirty life that is lived here. I was there once for two carnivals, and I was astonished at the triumphs and at the stupendous feasts which were furnished by the magnanimous Reali, the gracious Floridi, and the honored Cortesi. And at the sight of so many Fathers of their Country, so many illustrious Senators, so many egregious Procurators, so many doctors and Cavalieri, and so much nobility, so much youth, and so much wealth—at the sight of all this I was beside myself. And I have seen a letter to the Most Christian King,[1] in which it was related that when the truly Most Serene Prince Andrea Gritti, with his Omnipotent Highness, boarded the Bucentaur[2] to honor the royal blood of France and the Duchess of Ferrara, it was as much as the barge could do to keep from foundering, so heavily was it laden with good sense. The deeds done

[1]Francis I.

[2]The state barge of Venice.

by the most prudent arms of their Captain General F. M., Duke of Urbino, will live eternally in the pages of the Most Divine Monsignor Bembo. And you need not doubt that those Signori who, through their princes, express their will in the good and just Venetian Senate, are any less affable or less courteous than those who here are orators to his Holiness. There is also the Right Reverend Legate Monsignor Alcandro, whose learning and religion, if it were held up to themselves by other prelates as a mirror, would redound to the reputation of the clergy. But I must not forget Don Lopes, heir to the secrets and the undertakings of the most felicitous Caesar, Charles V, support of the Christain faith.

VAL. Are you speaking of Don Lopes Soria, on whose courteous kindness the hopes of Pietro Aretino lean?

FLAM. I am speaking of a new Ulysses.

VAL. I bow to the sound of his name, and it is quite right to say that he is the protector of all virtue.

FLAM. I spoke with the worthy and faithful Giangioacchino and with all the gentle souls who come to that land, and I heard of the merits of the most learned Monsignor di Selva, Bishop of Lavaur, in whose manners one readily recognizes the creature of the great King Francis; and as His Highness' orator there, he astonished everyone with his prudence and his modesty. Regard also the continent gravity and gentle breeding of the Prothonotary Cassale, example of true liberality; half of all England would not equal his merits toward his King. By God, Valerio, but the man who there enjoys the favor of His Excellency, the Duke of Urbino, deserves to rule the world and must be truly worthy of His Lordship's grace. What a personage is Vesconte in carrying out the behests of his master, the Duke of Milan. Of the kindness of Benedetto Agnello toward the great Duke of Mantua I am silent. As I am of the good Gian Jacopo Tebaldo and what he does for his good Ferrara; nor do

I speak of what a gentle old man he is or what a faithful friend. He is the cousin, I believe, of our Messer Antonio Tabeldeo, who is the unique spirit of the Muses and astonishes the world with his writings, as does Pollio Aretino with his *Trionfi* which he is soon to give to the world.

VAL. You have truly closed my mouth.

FLAM. I have passed over the throng of painters and of sculptors who, with the good M. Simon Biaco, are to be found there; nor do I speak of those whom the singular Luigi Caorlini has taken with him to Constantinople, from which place the splendid Marco di Niccolo has just returned, in whose mind is as much magnificence as there is in the minds of kings; and for this reason, the lofty and fortunate Signor Luigi Gritti has given him a place in the bosom of his grace; and despite the carpings of the plebeians and the maligned, there is also the glorious, great and wonderful Titian, whose color breathes like flesh. The stupendous Michelangelo praised with astonishment his portrait of the Duke of Ferrara, which the Emperor has taken for his own. Look at Pordonone, whose works make one doubt whether nature gives relief to art or art to nature. And while I do not deny that Marcantonio was the first with the burin, Gianiacobo Caralio, the Veronese, his pupil, has surpassed him, as may be seen in the works he has carved in wood. And I know for a certainty that Matteo del Nasar, famous and dear to the King o France, and to the most valiant Giovanni da Castell Bolognese, regarded as miraculous the works in crystal, stone and steel of Luigi Anichini, who is also in Venice. And there, too, is Francesco Marcolini, full of virtue and of a flowering genius. There, too, you will find the good Serlio, the architect of Bologna, and M. Francesco Alunno, the divine inventor of the alphabets of all the languages in the world. What more? The good Jacopo

Sansovino has exchanged Rome for Venice, and wisely; for as the great Adriano, father of music said, Venice is a veritable Noah's Ark.

VAL. I believe you, and in return for my believing what you have said, I want you to believe what I am about to tell you.

FLAM. Go on and tell me.

VAL. I should like to say, leaping from one argument to another, that your lack of fortune comes from the little respect that you have always had for the Court. Finding fault with everything she thought and did, you created a prejudice against yourself, and always will.

FLAM. I would rather create a prejudice against myself by speaking the truth than win favor by telling lies.

VAL. That speaking the truth is the thing that is displeasing, and that is the only beam the Signori have in their eyes, the fact that you speak the truth. Of the great ones one must say that the evil they do is good, and it is as perilous and harmful to blame them as it is safe and profitable to praise them. They are permitted to do anything, and we are permitted to say nothing, and it is for God to correct their wickednesses, not for us. Collect your mind a little, and let us speak without passion. Do you feel that you did a good thing by speaking of the Court as you did?

FLAM. What have I said of her?

VAL. You have spread the story that she is a heretic, a falsifier, a traitress, a brazen and dishonest wench. And she has become the talk of the people, thanks to those reports of yours.

FLAM. It is no more than she deserves.

VAL. It may be so, but there is little point in gossipping about the Court, for there is always Pasquin to speak of her, as he always will. You have encroached on papal ground and abused the nobility. Don't you think you should be ashamed to say the things you have said?

FLAM. Why should I be ashamed to say what they are not ashamed to do?

VAL. Because Lords are Lords.

FLAM. Yes, Lords are Lords, and men are men. They take pleasure in seeing those who serve them die of hunger, and they rejoice at the sight as much as a good man would suffer. It is a triumph to me to tell of their poltrooneries. I shall be glad to be silent when any two of them can be found who will imitate the kindness and liberality of the King of France. But I shall never be silent.

VAL. Why?

FLAM. Because you will find a discreet and respectable Court long before you will find two such persons. I am opening my mind to you, because, having wasted so many years in service, I can endure it no longer, and I am resolved to go to the court of his Majesty. If I had had no other pleasure there, it would be enough to see so many Lords, so many Captains, and so many virtuous men and I should live happy; for that pomp, that gayety and that liberty is the consolation of all; while at this Court, every man is miserable, melancholy and despairing. I have heard that the pleasing kindness of the Most Christian King is such as to lead everyone to adore him, just as here, the malignant uncouthness of the Lords forces one to hate them.

VAL. It cannot be denied that things are as you say and even worse. And there is but one King of France in the world; and his grace is very great, so great that even those who have never seen him call upon him, celebrate, respect and adore him.[1]

FLAM. And for that reason I want to cure myself of this place by going to serve him; and as you know, I hold letters from the Monsignor di Baif, the vase of all good

[1] This was written at a time when Aretino expected to get something out of Francis.

literature, who was formerly his ambassador in Venice, and who assures me of a favorable reception from his Majesty. If it were not for this, I should go to Constantinople to serve the Signor Alvigi Gritti, in whom is to be found all the courtesy which has fled from those plebeian Lords who are Princes only in name. To him Pietro Aretino would go, if it were not that King Francis had bound him with chains of gold, and if the magnanimous Antonio da Leva had not enriched him with cups of gold and pensions.

VAL. I have heard of the King and of the gift which was made him by Signor Antonio, who is indeed the chariot of Caesar's triumphs. But since you are disposed to go, wait long enough to see the departure of His Holiness for Marseilles.

FLAM. I would be waiting for the raven, if I did.

VAL. Don't you believe that he is going?

FLAM. I believe in Christ.

VAL. Everyone is getting ready for the departure, and you make light of it.

FLAM. If the Pope goes there, I shall begin to believe either that the world is coming to an end or that he is becoming a good man.

VAL. Why do you doubt it?

FLAM. Because if this were so, I should be willing to groom the horses in this Court and call myself fortunate. Because if His Holiness were to unite with the King, we should be rid of lice; but it seems to me that if he goes to Marseilles in the same fashion he went to Bologna, we shall be the sport of the French courtiers, who employ more style in dressing and dining than there is misery among us; and if it were not that the pomp of the Cardinal de' Medici covers everything, we should be like a crowd of bankrupt tradesmen.

VAL. Keep still. The master is coming out. Let us go to the

place you know, and there I will answer you on this subject of the departure of the Court.

(They go out. Parabolano and Rosso come in.)

PAR. I saw you coming out of the garden door. What did Madonna Alvigia have to say?

Rosso. She is astonished at your good breeding, your grace and liberality, and she has something she wants to put in your arms; everything is all right. Your Lordship has not shown courtesy to an ungrateful person.

PAR. That is nothing to what I intend to do for her.

Rosso. At a quarter after six your friend will be in her house. But be advised; she is overcome with shame at being obliged to traffic with your Lordship in the dark; but do you see that it doesn't come to light.

PAR. Surely she will deign to be seen by me, though I am unworthy of looking upon her.

Rosso. That is nothing. All women are capricious at first, and then, laying aside their timid modesty, they would be seen even in the Square of St. Peter's in order to get their desires.

PAR. Do you think she does it out of timidity?

Rosso. I'm sure of it. But what do you think?

PAR. That it is a sweet and bitter thing to be loved.

Rosso. The tavern is a sweet thing, says Cappa.

PAR. Livia will be sweet too.

Rosso. That's your imagination. For my part, I have more respect for a decanter of Greek wine than for a Greek angel.

PAR. If you had tasted the ambrosia which amorous mouths distill, wines would appear to you bitter by comparison.

Rosso. You seem to think that I'm a virgin. I've tasted my share, and I have not found that melody which you did.

PAR. But gentle ladies have a different taste.

Rosso. That's true; because they don't urinate like the others.

PAR. You're mad to speak of it.

ROSSO. And you are mad to answer. Listen, didn't you use to tell me that the sweetness which comes from tongues that know how to speak well of others was greater than that of grapes, than that of figs, and that of mallows?

PAR. Yes, up to a certain point.

ROSSO. Oh how they murder me, those sonnets of Pasquin.[1]

PAR. I didn't know you enjoyed poetry.

ROSSO. Why not? Do you know, if I had studied, I might have become a Philosopher or a Bonnet-Maker.

PAR. Ha, ha, ha!

ROSSO. When I was with Antonio Lelio Romano, I used to pass the time in reading the things which he composed in honor of the Cardinals, and I know a lot of them by heart. Oh they are divine, and I am a slave to that Barbieraccio who says that it would be no error to read every morning two of the Epistles and a Gospel.

PAR. Oh, a pretty pass!

ROSSO. What do you think of that one which says:

Non ha Papa Leon tanti parenti?[2]

PAR. Fine.

ROSSO. And this one:

Da poi che Costantin fece il presente.
Per levarsi la lebbra de la spalle?[3]

PAR. Very sharp.

ROSSO. The Cook is St. Peter, if the Pope is one of the three friars.[4]

[1]Parabolano's remark apparently reminds him of a line in the Pasquinades.

[2]See Hutton, p. 38: "In *La Cortigiana* he gives us the first verses of several of the Pasquinades he wrote at this time when he attacked every candidate [for the papal throne] except Cardinal de' Medici with the vilest abuse, and he reminds his candidate later, when he had become Clement VII., of his services on this occasion." This line ["Has not Pope Leo many relatives?"] reminds one of a certain obscene ditty beginning, "The Pope has many nephews."

[3]"Since Constantine made a present for taking leprosy off the back." It is difficult to render these couplets here, lifted as they are from the context.

[4]This, too, is a line from the Pasquinades.

PAR. Ha, ha, ha!

ROSSO. *Piacevi, monna Chiesa bella e buona.*
Per legittimo sposo l'ermellino?[1]

PAR. Oh, good!

ROSSO. *O Cardinali, se, voi, fossi, noi,*
Che noi per nulla vorremmo esser voi?[2]

PAR. Excellent!

ROSSO. I am going to hunt up those which have been made by Master Pasquin this year. There ought to be a thousand knavish things in them.

PAR. By my faith, Rosso, but you are a gallant fellow.

ROSSO. Who doesn't know it?

PAR. But let's not lose time. To the house, for I want you to take a message to the old lady.

(They go out. Andrea and Maco come in.)

AND. You took to your legs, and there was no need of it, and on your account the Signor Parabolano has given me a Neapolitan reproof.

MACO. Tell me, how does one come into the world, Maestro?

AND. Through a cave.

MACO. Large or narrow?

AND. Large as an oven.

MACO. What does he come here to do?

AND. To live.

MACO. How does one live here?

AND. By eating and by drinking.

MACO. I shall live here all right, for I eat like a wolf and drink like a horse; yes, in faith, I swear to God, I kiss your hand. But what happens when a man is through living?

AND. He dies in a hole as spiders do.

MACO. Are we not all the sons of Andare and of Andera?

[1] "Mistress Church, so fine and good, How should you like to wed an ermine hood?"

[2] "O, Cardinals, if you were we, We should not wish like you to be."

And. We are all the sons of Adam and Eve, old maccaroon without salt, without cheese and without fire.

Maco. I think it would be a good thing to make me a Courtier with the moulds. I dreamed about it last night, and besides, Grillo has told me.

And. You speak better than a crayfish with two mouths. And your Lordship understands that bombards, bells and towers are also made with moulds.

Maco. I had thought that towers grow, as they do at Sienna.

And. You were very far wrong.

Maco. Will I do well in a mould?

And. Very well.

Maco. Why?

And. Because it is less labor to make a man than it is to make a bombard; but since you are so expedient in the matter, let's hurry.

Maco. I want to go there and be put in the moulds today, or I shall burst.

(*They go out. Alvigia comes in.*)

Alv. I have more to do than a pair of newlyweds. This one wants ointments, this one a pregnancy powder, this one wants to give me letters, this one to send me to the witches, and this one this thing and that one that, and I ought to be looking for Rosso.

(*Rosso comes in.*)

Rosso. What luck to find you here.

Alv. I am the she-ass of the Commons.

Rosso. Let the other trifles go and astrologize what you are going to do to my master tonight.

Alv. I've just had a hundred words with my spiritual confessor before I came here, and so, do what you think best.

Rosso. You'll find me near my master's palace; but what brother is that?

ALV. The one I'm looking for.

(Rosso goes out and Guardiano comes in.)

GUAR. *Oves et boves universas insuper et pecora campi.*

ALV. You are always saying your prayers.

GUAR. I don't give myself too much trouble about it, for I am not one of those who are overly nimble about going to Paradise, since if I don't go there today, I will go tomorrow; it is so big that there's room enough for us all, God be praised.

ALV. I believe it, and yet I think not. So many folks have gone there and so many want to go; and it breaks my heart, when I hear the passion at the Coliseum and think that all the folks in the world will not be able to go there.

GUAR. Don't wonder at a thing like that, for souls (they are like lies, in a manner of speaking, I may tell you) do not occupy any space.

ALV. I don't understand.

GUAR. *Exempli gratia.* Let's say that we are in a little room, and I tell you that the elephant is about to die and has made his will; now isn't that a lie worthy of excommunication?

ALV. Yes, father.

GUAR. And yet the room is not encumbered with it nor by the thousands of others that have been told there; and so it is, the souls in Paradise do not take up any space, just as lies do not. And in short, in Paradise we shall enjoy two worlds.

ALV. It is a fine thing to know the Scripture. And now, my spiritual father, I want your Paternity to tell me two things: one, if my mistress is to go to the place of salvation; the other, if the Turk is coming or not?

GUAR. As to the first, your mistress will remain twenty-five days in Purgatory *circum circa*, and then she will go into Limbo for five or six days, and then *dextram patris caeli caelorum.*

Alv. He says she won't, and she is lost.

Guar. Shouldn't I know?

Alv. Serpent's tongue.

Guar. As to the coming of the Turk, that is really nothing. And if he did come, what difference would it make to you?

Alv. What difference would it make to me? Being impaled alive doesn't suit my fancy in any way. Impaling poor ladies is a little thing to you, I suppose? And I am in despair when I think that our Priests here deserve to be impaled.

Guar. Gossip and fables. Now go, and God be with you. I must look after a treatise which I am to make in Verucchio, and which is to tear the Count Gian Maria Giudeo, the musician, to pieces. *(He goes out.)*

Alv. God be with you. These friars must have a finger in every pie, and maybe you don't think they look holy while they are about it? But who wouldn't believe them in their wooden shoes and their cinctures? He must be virtuous who would be saved like my mistress, and when I come to think of it, I am rather glad that she is to burn; for she will be a good go-between for me there as she was here. And now to find Rosso.

(She goes out. Grillo comes in.)

Grillo. I must find Maestro Mercurio, the best companion and the best banterer in Rome, for Maestro Andrea has given M. Maco to believe that Mercurio is the doctor who has the moulds for making courtiers. But here he comes, by my faith.

(Mercurio comes in.)

Mer. What's the news?

Grillo. Knavish news. A big bird of a Sanese has come here to make himself a Cardinal, and Maestro Andrea has made him believe that you are the most eminent doctor with the moulds.

MER. You don't need to tell me any more, for one of his grooms who was angry at him and looking for a new master, has told me everything.

GRILLO. Ha, ha, ha!

MERC. I want to put him in one of those great water kettles; but we must first make him take a dose of pills.

GRILLO. Ha, ha, ha! But look, Messer Priamo and Maestro Andrea are waiting for us.

(End of Act Third)

ACT FOURTH

(*Enter Andrea, Maco, Mercurio, the doctor and Grillo.*)

AND. We are agreed then on the price, and the Messer, with the courage of a Sanese, will run the risk of taking the pills.

MACO. They make me very pensive, very.

MER. *Pilularum romanae Curiae sunt dulciora.*

GRILLO. *Scherzate co' santi e lasciate star i fanti.*[1]

MACO. Why do you say that?

GRILLO. Don't you hear the doctor swearing like a gambler?

MACO. He speaks by letter, you beast. Listen to me, my Lord.

MER. *Dico vobis dulciora sunt Curiae Romanae pilularum.*

MACO. *Nego istam.*

MER. *Aprogressus herbis, et in verbis sic inquit totiens quotiens aliquo cortigianos diventare volunt pilularum accipere necessitatis est.*

MACO. But Petrarch doesn't say *Cortigianos.*

AND. He says it in a thousand places.

MACO. That's right; Petrarch does say it in that sonnet: *E si debile il filo.*

AND. You are more learned than Orlando.

MER. In conclusion, does your Lordship know the medlars?

MACO. Yes, master.

MER. The medlars of Sienna are the pills of Rome.

MACO. If the pills of Rome are the medlars of Sienna, I will take a thousand.

GRILLO. *Che tutta notte canta.*[2]

MACO. What are you saying?

[1] "Play with saints and leave infants alone."

[2] Which sings all night.

GRILLO. I was saying that it would be a good thing if you would dispatch me to look after the moulds.

MACO. Go ahead and pick out the most comfortable ones.

GRILLO. I'll go.

MACO. Listen. Pick out the best-looking ones.

GRILLO. I understand.

MACO. And see to it, Grillo, that no one becomes a Courtier before I do.

GRILLO. It shall be done.

AND. And don't forget the scales, for as soon as we have him in the moulds, we want to weigh him and charge him so much a pound.

GRILLO. There will be nothing lacking. (*He goes out.*)

AND. There is nothing more, except for you to swear that when you shall have become a Courtier and a Cardinal, you will show me favors, for one no sooner enters the Court than he puts on a different face, and, from being learned, wise and good, he becomes a sorry and ignorant madman; every vile knave, as soon as he feels the camlet on him, will not deign to speak to anyone, and he is the mortal enemy of the one who once helped him, for the reason that he is ashamed to confess that he was once in misery. And so, swear.

MACO. I'll touch you under the chin.

AND. That's a boyish sport; swear a real oath.

MACO. By the blessed Cross.

AND. That's a woman's oath.

MACO. By the holy Gospel.

AND. That's a countryman's oath.

MACO. By the faith of God.

AND. That's the way a porter swears.

MACO. By my soul.

AND. That sounds like a hypocrite.

MACO. Body of the world.

AND. That's stupid and silly.

MACO. Do you want me to say Lord's Day?

MER. *Co' Santi, e lasciate star i fanti*, as Grillo said before.
MACO. I want to satisfy the Maestro, I do.
AND. Haven't I told you that profanity is necessary to a Courtier?
MACO. Yes, but I had forgotten it, I had.
MER. Let's not waste time till the moulds get cold, for wood at Rome costs an eyeful.
MACO. If you want some, I'll send for a pile from Sienna.
AND. Ha, ha, ha! What a *plusquam* perfect madman!
MACO. What's that you say?
MER. That you will be a *plusquam* perfect Courtier.
MACO. *Gran mercè*, doctor.

(*Grillo enters.*)

GRILLO. The pills, the moulds and everything are waiting.
MACO. The moon, in what position is it?
MER. In Colocut.
MACO. If it's not at mid-month, that's all right.
MER. It's been a year since it was.
MACO. Then I can take the medlars without fear of the flux.
MER. That's right gallant.
AND. Enter.
MACO. I go, I enter.

(*They go out. Alvigia and Rosso come in.*)

ALV. How goes it, Rosso old top?
ROSSO. I thought you were lost.
ALV. I'm all out of breath, I've just spoken to my confessor, and I know when the madonna's day of mid-August comes.
ROSSO. What good does it do you to know that?
ALV. Because I have made a vow to fast on her vigil. Then I had a dream explained and arranged to have the miracles of my mistress put into a sermon. I did the *Via de la Piamontese;* she has miscarried, you know. Then I gave a look at the ulcerated leg of Beatrice, oh for shame! Then I found in the monastery of the Convertite a place for the *pagnina;* and I went to Santo Janni

to visit the Spanish lady who has shut herself up there out of spite to Don Diego.

Rosso. I've heard that gossip.

Alv. And having done this, I gulped down a decanter of Corso at the Lepre and here I am.

Rosso. Alvigia, we are two, and yet we are one; and when you do me a service in words, by the body--by the blood of the immaculate, the blessed and consecrate, I am yours, body and soul.

Alv. If you don't go beyond words, the cow is ours.

Rosso. Cow? And am I not to have a little of something else?

Alv. Such talk! Aren't you ashamed?

Rosso. One at Court ashamed? Ha! The bracelet is yours.

Alv. I accept it and I do not accept it. I accept it, in case I am of service to you, and in case I am not, I do not accept it.

Rosso. You talk like the Sybil. Do you know what, I have it in for Valerio, and I should be the whole thing if he fell into disgrace with the master, and that would be a good thing for you.

Alv. I understand. A good thing for me, eh? Rest assured, I'll find a way to ruin him.

Rosso. How?

Alv. Let me think.

Rosso. Think well, for, if he goes to the bordello, I shall be *dominus dominantium.*

Alv. I have it.

Rosso. I can breathe a little more freely now.

Alv. I will say that this Valerio of yours has told Liello di Rienzo Mazzienzo, the borther of Livia, how I am pimping for his sister, and make out that there is not a worse man in all Rome; and I think your master from the experience he has had in the past, will believe it.

Rosso. Oh what genius! Oh what foresight! It is a treason that you are not Princess of Corneto, of Palo, of Magliana, etc. But there's the master. Alvigia, *in te domine*

speravi, and I shall not forget what you do for me.

(*Parabolano comes in.*)

PAR. What is my Goddess doing?
ALV. My goodness does not deserve that.
PAR. God help me.
ROSSO. There's bad news.
PAR. What is it?
ALV. Go on, tell him, go on.
ROSSO. For my own part, I would defecate on the world, but I am grieved for this poor woman's sake.
PAR. Don't keep me in suspense.
ROSSO. Your Valerio . . .
PAR. What has my Valerio done?
ROSSO. Nothing.
ALV. Do you know, Signor? he has gone to tell the brother of Livia that Rosso and I are pimping for his sister.
PAR. *Oimè*, what's this I hear?
ROSSO. Yes, and the cruel braggart of Trastevere has been the death of forty Bailiffs and five or six Sheriffs, and yesterday he beat two of the guard; he bears arms in despite of the governor, and he's on the point of fighting with that Rienzo who with his great sword cut to pieces the pilgrim's crown; and I only hope to God your Lordship comes out of it clean.[1]
PAR. I am bursting! Don't hold me! I'll go at once and stick this dagger in his heart. Don't hold me!
ALV. Easy, easy, simulation, punishment, and not fury.
PAR. Traitor!
ROSSO. Be quiet. Folks will hear you and there will be a bigger scandal.
PAR. Assassin!
ALV. Don't remind me, the honor of Livia is in your keeping.
PAR. With five hundred *scudi* I've lifted him out of the mud.
ROSSO. He has the income of a Signor.

[1] *ne vada netto.*

PAR. Tell me, shall I be able to have Livia now? You're silent?

ROSSO. She is silent because her heart is breaking at not being able to serve you.

PAR. Beseech her, dear Rosso, conjure her, or I'll die.

ROSSO. You make me blush, Signor, to think I'm your slave; but Alvigia is not to be forced, ever; it is better to be a live ass than a dead Bishop.

ALV. Don't weep, dear Signor, for I could throw myself in the fire at the sight of your Lordship. What if her brother does kill me? I'll only be out of my misery, and I shan't have to suffer from famine any more, for there at least I shan't die of hunger.

PAR. Here, take this diamond and eat it.

ROSSO. The devil, no, for they are poisonous.

ALV. What do you know about it?

ROSSO. So I've been told by Mainoldo Mantavano, a Catholic cavalier and the apostolic jeweler and the most diabolic madman besides, who used to be my master. Oh he is a big blockhead.

PAR. Take it, *Madonna madre.*

ALV. *Gran mercè* to your Lordship. Come into the house. Wait here, Rosso.

ROSSO. I'll wait.

(*Alvigia and Parabolano go out.*)

He who is an ass and thinks he is a stag will lose his friend and never have any money, says Mescolino da Sienna. I have given you bread for your cakes, Sire Zugo. I know where you're going. You're going to play the Lord at Tigoli. I know you of old, dressed up like an ox and stinking like one, hurling insults at everybody and treating everyone like a beast, talking always of war, as if you had been the Signor Giovanni de' Medici himself; and if anyone answers you, you are on his back at once, like a furious ass; and the priests who surround the master of ceremonies when he waits on

the Pope in the Cappella are not so numerous as are his bowings and scrapings when he talks with anyone; and he would kill you for not taking off your barretta to him or for failing to give him a *Signor si* and a *Signor no*. And he plays the imperial, as if the King of France took any notice of such simpletons, poltroons who are not even fit to take care of his Majesty's dogs. He was angry with his own brother for not addressing him as reverend in the superscriptions of his letters. You may be a Lord, but you'll turn out a knave, even if you are rich, you poltroon.

(*Alvigia comes in.*)

ALV. Whom were you barking at?

ROSSO. At myself. How go our plans?

ALV. Very fine: kicks, fists, tugs of the beard, the devil is to pay.

ROSSO. What did he say?

ALV. Why do this to me, Signor? What have I done, master?

ROSSO. And the Signor, what did he reply?

ALV. You know well enough, you big traitor.

ROSSO. Ha, ha, ha!

ALV. And now do I get the necklace?

ROSSO. And the diamond too.

ALV. Why is it that the first day a lover gets snared he becomes a dotard? But he is to be here at a quarter after six. The time is almost up. I must go, for I have no time to throw away. *Sta' sano.* (*She goes out.*)

ROSSO. Oh what a devil-chaser! Oh what a witch! What sort must the mistress be if the disciple is like this? At your service, Signor.

(*Parabolano comes in.*)

PAR. Is it true Valerio said such things about me?

ROSSO. And worse yet, but I don't like to repeat them.

PAR. To the galleys with him. I've made up my mind.

ROSSO. Poison and things . . .

PAR. How poison and things?

Rosso. Poison that he bought, etc.

Par. This is a case for the Sheriff!

Rosso. Whores and lads and gambling.

Par. What's that you say?

Rosso. Then he spread that story about your family and the one about your aunt.

Par. What?

Rosso. And how you kept him in want.

Par. Like servants, like enemies.

Rosso. He added that you were ignorant, an ingrate, and envious.

Par. He lies in the throat.

Rosso. But I shall be faithful. I have no spite to take out on anyone. Since he has erred, punish him, that's all there is to it. Meanwhile, Alvigia will do her duty, but what will you say to the Signora at the first meeting?

Par. What would you say?

Rosso. I should let my hands do the talking.

Par. Ha, ha, ha!

Rosso. It's a treason she can't see you in the light.

Par. Why?

Rosso. Because, to tell the truth, where will they find another like you? What eyes, what attractive brows, what lips, what teeth and what a breath![1] Your Lordship has the most admirable grace, and I do not say this to flatter you; I swear to God that, when you walk down the street, they hang out of the windows. But why am I not a woman?

Par. What would you do if you were a woman?

Rosso. Pull you on top me or die.

Par. Ha, ha, ha!

Rosso. If your Lordship would like to ride in cavalcade, the mules should be in waiting.

Par. I want to take a little exercise.

[1]From which it may be seen, "halitosis" is as old as the cinquecento!

Rosso. Don't tire yourself, for remember that the jousts of love require strong men.

Par. You take me for a weakling?

Rosso. No, but I should like to see you fresh when you meet Livia.

Par. Let us go, then, in peace.

Rosso. As your Lordship pleases.

(They go out. Valerio comes in.)

Val. I've fallen into a fine pile of straw, and it might be said that I've broken my neck. I have been assaulted by my Lord, in deed and in words, and I cannot imagine why. Surely some invidious tongue has been whispering in his ear. Is it possible that Lords are so easy, they give credence to every bit of gossip they hear, and, without seeking the truth, proceed to act without respect, without reason and without advice? What a nature is theirs! What a life is that of a servant, and what manners are those of the Court! The Lords always act furiously, and the welfare of servants is always dependent on the volubility of others. The Court takes no greater pleasure than in driving this one or that one to despair with the gnawings of envy, which is born and dies with the Court. As for me, I have no desire except to go and take a little rest; I'm only afflicted by the thought that I must leave in disgrace him who has made me what I am, and that my leaving in this manner will win me the name of an ingrate. Everyone will say: "The good Valerio grew rich at his master's expense, and now he turns his back on him." And so, I am beside myself, not from the injury I have wrongly received, for he who serves is obliged to suffer the wrath and spite of his master as he would those of his own father. But I am grieved to think of the thing which has turned him against me. Can it be that the passion he suffers from being in love has led him, like a blind man, to take it out on me? Surely it all comes

from this. I'll wait and see how the thing comes out, keeping as humble as I can, and God must do the rest. And now I must go see what I can learn from those in the house.

(*He goes out, Alvigia comes in, goes up to Togna's door, and knocks.*)

TOGNA. (*From within*) Who's there?

ALV. It is I.

TOGNA. Who are you?

ALV. Alvigia, my daughter.

TOGNA. Wait a minute. (*She opens the door.*)

ALV. Greetings, dear daughter. *Ave Maria.*

TOGNA. What miracle brings you here?

ALV. This Advent and these Ember Days have so distempered me with their cursed fast days that I am not myself any more. *Gratia plena dominus tecum.*

TOGNA. You are always saying your prayers, and here I never go to church nor do anything I ought to.

ALV. *Benedicta tu.*[1] I am the greatest sinner of all. *In mulieribus.* Do you know what I've come to tell you?

TOGNA. Madonna, no.

ALV. I want you to come to my house at five o'clock, for I'm going to introduce you to the nobility. *Et benedictus ventris tui.* I'll treat you better than I did the other day. *In hunc et in hora.* Look at me. *Mortis nostrae.* What do you think of it? *Amen.*

TOGNA. The end of it is, I'll do what you want me to, for that old souse deserves all that's coming to him.

ALV. That's right. *Pater noster*—you must come dressed like a man, for these stable boys—*qui es in caelis*—play some foolish jokes at night—*sanctificetur nomen tuum*—and I don't want you to get into trouble—*adveniat regnum tuum*—As Angela did—*in caelo et in terra.*

[1]Camerini remarks, in a note to his edition of this play: "This mixture of mutilated prayers and gallant remarks is the high point of Aretino's impiety, which is yet marvelously characteristic of the devotions of a *pollastriera.*"

TOGNA. *Oimè*, there's my husband.

ALV. Don't be a ninny and lose your wits. *Panem nostrum quotidiano da nobis hodie.*[1] There's no other feast day that I know of this week, daughter, except the pilgrimage to San Lorenzo *extra* . . .

(*Enter Arcolano.*)

ARC. What are you two gossiping about?

ALV. *Debita nostra debitoribus.* Monna Antonia was just asking me about the pilgrimage to *San Lorenzo extra muros. Sic nos demittimus.*

ARC. I don't like these carryings-on.

ALV. *Et ne nos inducas.* My good man, it is necessary once in a while to think of one's soul. *In tentatione.*

ARC. My conscience!

TOGNA. You think everyone is like yourself, who never go to mass or matins.

ARC. Keep still, you sow.

TOGNA. *Anima tua, manica mia.*[2]

ARC. I'll fix you.

ALV. Don't be angry. *Sed libera nos a malo.*

ARC. Do you know what I have to say to you, old woman?

ALV. No, my sweetness and life, what have you to say?

ARC. That if I find you talking any more with this brazen-faced old pile of dung, I won't be responsible for what I do.

ALV. *Lagrimarum valle.* I wouldn't care if you covered me with gold. *A te suspiramus.* God knows my good intentions. Monna Antonia, you are not to come on the pilgrimage I told you of, for it is the devil himself who has taken your husband by the hair, *clementes et flentes.*

TOGNA. It is wine that has him by the hair, I can see that.

ARC. Where are you going?

TOGNA. On the pilgrimage, to do my duty, can't you see?

ARC. Go on in the house and hurry up about it.

[1] Alvigia's Latin is a little off at times.

[2] Your soul, my sleeve

TOGNA. I'll go, but what then?

(*Togna and Alvigia go out.*)

ARC. He who has a she-goat has horns; all the proverbs are true. My wife is not of much weight, I'm wise to the fact that she is going to look for her own consolations, and this old bitch has made me think of my plans. It will be a good thing for me to play the drunkard tonight. That won't be much trouble for me, and maybe I can find out where this pilgrimage is she's talking about. (*Calling*). Togna, Togna, don't you hear?

TOGNA (*from within*). What do you want?

ARC. Come down.

TOGNA. Here I am. (*She comes in.*)

ARC. Weren't you waiting dinner on me?

TOGNA. Nothing else but.[1]

ARC. That's fair enough.[2]

TOGNA. You would do better to stay home and leave the taverns and wenches alone.

ARC. You give me a headache.

TOGNA. I hope you meet someone who gives you what you deserve.

ARC Shut up, old long-tongue.

TOGNA. Is this the thanks I get?

ARC. Well, anyway, you don't see me flirting at the windows.

TOGNA. So you think I'm one of that kind, do you, old soak?

ARC. I'm off. (*He goes out.*)

TOGNA. At the same time, but not to the same place. You go your way and I'll go mine, and I'll get even with you yet. You with your lady friends and I with my gentleman friends, you to wine and I to love. And I don't care if you split, you jealous old drunkard.

(*She goes out. Rosso and Parabolano come in.*)

[1]*Non fu mai piu.*

[2]*Basta mo.*

Rosso. You seem to be afraid that the Sun and Moon will fall in love with her.

Par. Who knows?

Rosso. Only I. Do you think the Moon would fall in love with a woman like her?

Par. It might be. But the Sun?

Rosso. The Sun is too busy.

Par. Why?

Rosso. Because it's too busy drying the shirt of Venus which Mercury—I mean, Mars—has p——— on.

Par. That's silly talk. Why, I'm afraid the very bed she sleeps in and the room she lives in will enjoy her love.

Rosso. You are most diabolically jealous. Do you think that the room and the bed have (saving your reverence) the same lust as you?

Par. Let's go home then.

Rosso. Your Lordship has quicksilver on his back; and so, don't let anything stop you.

(*They go out. Grillo comes in.*)

Grillo. Ha, ha, ha! Messer Maco has been in the kettle, which he thought was a mould, and he has belched up his bowels, as anyone would who hadn't the stomach to suffer heat. They've perfumed, shaved and dressed him up so that he looks like another person. He leaps, dances, sings and says all sorts of things, such knavish words that you would think he came from Bergamo rather than from Sienna. And Maestro Andrea pretends to be astonished at every word that drops from his mouth and makes him believe, with unheard of oaths, that he is the finest Courtier that ever was seen. And Messer Maco thinks he is the finest ever. Ha, ha, ha! And he is determined at all costs to break the kettle, so that no other Courtier so fine as he can be made in it. And now, he is sending me for sweetbreads to Sienna, and he has told me that if I don't come back right away, he will give me a beating, and the old raven

is waiting for me. The best part will be, when they make him look in a concave mirror, which will show him his face all changed. What sport that will be! If I did not have to go to the garden of Messer Agostino Chigi, I would stay to see the fun, but I can't do it. Hello, Rosso, I wasn't expecting you.

(*Rosso comes in. Grillo goes out.*)

Rosso. *Addio*, Grillo, *a rivederci*. A cancer on love and all that goes with it. I've become a messenger boy to fetch procuresses for my master, who wants to make me his *Maestro di Casa*. I'd rather be anything else than one of those major-domos who fatten themselves, their concubines and he-concubines, on the mouthfuls which the big knaves steal from the other servants. I know one traitor who even lent his master at interest the money he had stolen in the government of his house. Oh, the gluttons, oh, the big asses! You go to the privy with a fine torch, and we go to bed in the dark; you drink divine wines and we drink vinegar and mouldy wine; you feed on choice meats and we on stale beef. But where is that phantasm of an Alvigia? And what the devil is that Jew crying?

(*Romanello, a Jew, enters.*)

Jew. Old iron, old iron, old iron.

Rosso. I ought to treat him as I did the Fisherman.

Jew. Old iron, old iron.

Rosso. Come here, Jew.

Jew. What will you have?

Rosso. What doublet is that?

Jew. It used to belong to the Cavalier Grandino. And what satin!

Rosso. What's it worth?

Jew. Try it on, and then we'll talk of the price.

Rosso. Now you're talking.

Jew. Put the cloak on first. Put your arm in here. May I

never see the Messiah, if it wasn't made for your back; and the very latest cut.

Rosso. You don't say.

Jew. May I never go to the Synagogue on the Sabbath if it wasn't made for your figure.

Rosso. And now to the price, and in case you treat me right, I will buy also that friar's hood for a brother of mine in Aracoeli.

Jew. If you take this hood also, I'll make you a bargain, and I would have you know that it came from the most reverend Aracoeli *in minoribus*.

Rosso. So much the better. But since my brother has a figure out of the ordinary, I'd like to see it on your back, and then we'll make a bargain.

Jew. That suits me. I want you to feel safe in spending your four farthings.

Rosso. You've dropped the cord. Now put on the scapular. In faith, it's a fine one.

Jew. And what cloth!

Rosso. And now, since you seem to be a good fellow, I've thought up something good for you.

Jew. A cancer on your thoughts.

Rosso. I want to make you a Christian.[1]

Jew. You must feel like talking. You believe in God and I in God. If you want to buy, that's one thing; and if you want to talk, that's another.

Rosso. It's a sin to do you a favor. Who said anything about the soul? The soul is a minor matter.

Jew. Take off my jerkin.

Rosso. Listen to me. There are three reasons why I'm going to make you a Christian.

Jew. Take it off, I tell you.

Rosso. Listen, you beast. If I make you a Christian, the very day you are baptised you will lay your claws on a basin

[1]The old theme. It is not hard to see where Shakespeare got his Shylock

full of *denarii*, and besides, all Rome will come to see you crowned with olive, which is a fine thing.

JEW. You are having a good time.

ROSSO. Another reason is, so you can eat pork.

JEW. I don't care much for that.

ROSSO. You don't care much for it? If you had ever had your fill of oiled bread,[1] you would thank a hundred Messiahs for love of it. Oh what a melody it is when the *pane unto* is on the fire with a jug between the legs and nothing to do but eat and drink.[2]

JEW. Give me my jerkin. I've got something to do.

ROSSO. The last reason is, so you will not have to wear the red sign on your breast.

JEW. What difference does that make?

ROSSO. It makes this difference, that the Spaniards would like to crucify you for that sign.

JEW. Why crucify me?

ROSSO. Because it makes you look like one of them.

JEW. There's a difference between them and us.

ROSSO. There is no difference if you wear that. And then, if you don't have the sign of a Jew, the urchins won't pelt you with orange peel and melons. And so, become a Christian, become a Christian, become a Christian. I say it to you three times.

JEW. I don't want to, I don't want to, I don't want to. I also say it to you three times.

ROSSO. Well, master Jew, like the good fellow I am, I've done my duty and relieved my conscience. And now, what do you want for the whole thing?

JEW. Twelve ducats.

ROSSO. In gold or in carlins?

JEW. In Romanian coin, that's understood.

ROSSO. Wait a minute, I'll be right back.

JEW. Here, where are you going?

[1] *pane unto.*

[2] See *Letters*, LVI., *et al.*

Rosso. Don't worry. It's full of moths anyway . . .

Jew. That's nothing.

Rosso. Wait here. Don't move.

Jew. Don't move, eh? Just watch me. (*Rosso starts to run out with the doublet, and the Jew, clad as a Friar, starts after him.*)

Jew. Stop, thief! Stop, thief!

(*The Sheriff and Bailiffs come in.*)

Sheriff. What's all the racket?

Rosso. Signor Capitano, this Friar just came out of a whore's house, or from some tavern, drunk. He started to run after me and I, who have nothing to do with the religious, took to my heels. But when I looked at him closely, I saw that he was neither a priest nor St. Francis himself.

Jew. I'm not a Friar; I'm Romanello, the Jew, and I want that jerkin he has on his back.

Sheriff. Ha! you dirty stinking dog, you, so you'd make sport of our religion? Take him, bind him and throw him in prison.

Jew. Mister Sheriff, that man's an impostor.

Bailiffs. Shut up, you dog of a Jew!

Sheriff. Put him in the stocks, in irons and in handcuffs.

Bailiffs. It shall be done.

Sheriff. And this evening, give him ten lashes.

Bailiffs. Twenty-five, if ten are not enough.

Rosso. Your Lordship is giving him a proper punishment. I think I've caught a cold, running like this; I'm sweating all over.

Sheriff. Ha, ha!

Rosso. You've got what's coming to you, poltroon of a Friar!

Sheriff (*to Rosso*). Come along with us; you've got the face of a good fellow.

Rosso. At your Highness' service.

(*They all go out except Rosso.*)

What does he know about faces? Oh these Sheriffs! They give someone the rope for carrying a dagger and let thieves go free; they even praise them, as this fellow did me just now, all for having called a hangman a Capitano. And now to find the old lady. I'll tell her the Signor has given me this doublet, and I'll tell the Signor that Livia has made me a present.

(*He goes out. Andrea, Maco and Mercurio come in.*)

And. By God, but a little sense is enough, as the motto says which Todeschino has on his shield.

Maco. Oh what a fine, what a divine Courtier I am!

Mer. You'll never see your match in a thousand years.

Maco. I want to see how I look as a Courtier.

And. (*handing him a concave mirror*) Take a look then, and I hope you don't lose your head, as Sire Narcissus did.

Maco. I want to look at my face; give it to me. Oh what pain I've suffered! I'd rather give birth to a child than be in those moulds.

And. Look, then.

Maco. O God! O my Lord! I'm ruined! Ah, knaves! Give me back my face, give me back my head, my hair, my nose! Oh what a mouth! *Oimè*, what eyes! *Commendo spiritum meum.* (*He sinks to his knees.*)

Mer. Get up! It's the cobwebs in your brain that make you see double.

And. (*handing him another mirror.*) Here, look, and you'll see it's all an accident.

Maco. I'll take another look. (*With the other mirror in his hand*). Ah, I'm myself again!

And. Your Lordship has told a fib in saying you were ruined.

Maco. I am saved! I am alive! I am I! And now, I want to run through all Rome, I want to flay the Governor alive, who sent the Sheriff out to look for me. I want to curse, I want to bear arms, I want to spike all the ladies.

Away, doctor, *puttana nostra vostra.*[1] Away, Maestro, for by the body . . . you don't know me now that I've become a Courtier, eh?

MER. I commend myself to your Lordship, *a rivederci.*

AND. Ha, ha, ha!

MACO. I want to be a Bishop, and tomorrow a Cardinal, and tomorrow night Pope. Here we are at the house of Camilla. Knock hard.

BIAGINA. (*from inside the house*) Who's knocking?

AND. Open to a gentleman.

BIAG. Who is the gentleman?

MACO. The Signor Maco.

BIAG. What Signor Maco?

MACO. What Signor Maco? May God give you an evil year, poltroon of a she-pig!

BIAG. The Signora has company.

MACO. Chase them away.

BIAG. What, chase away my mistress' gentleman friends?

MACO. Yes, away with them, or I'll give you a flogging; I'll give you a thousand cold-water enemas.

AND. Open to a new Courtier.

BIAG. At your service, Maestro Andrea.

AND. Draw the bolt.

BIAG. *Ora.*[2]

MACO. What does she say?

AND. *Che ti adora.*[3]

MACO. *Mora.*[4]

BIAG. Oh what a madman!

MACO. What's she barking about?

AND. She's excusing herself for not having recognized you.

MACO. I want to be recognized, I do.

AND. Enter, your Lordship.

[1]Your whore is ours.

[2]Now, right away. A word play such as characterizes the early Shakespearean comedies.

[3]That she adores you.

[4]Untranslatable here.

MACO. I enter. 'Ods blood but . . . I'll spike all the women in the house.

(*They go out. Rosso comes in, goes up to the house of Alvigia, and knocks.*)

ALV. (*from within*) The man must be crazy to knock like that.

(*Rosso knocks again.*)

ALV. Do you want to break the door down?

ROSSO. Open, it's Rosso.

ALV. I thought you wanted to tear the door down.

ROSSO. What are you up to? Some witchcraft?

ALV. I was drying some roots in the shade, but I can't tell you what they were. And I had a few alembics in the oven to make a little *acqua vita.*

ROSSO. Have you spoken to her?

ALV. Yes, but . . .

ROSSO. What do you mean by that pause?

ALV. Her husband is a jealous bird . . . [1]

ROSSO. What! Is he wise?[2]

ALV. He is wise, and he is not wise; but we shall see what we shall see.

ROSSO. Tell me in plain Italian, for I don't understand your cipher.

ALV. You have to talk that way not to be taken for a rogue. Go back to the Signor and tell him to come at a quarter after six.

ROSSO. One kiss, Queen of Empresses, for Rome without you would be like a spring without a bucket.

ALV. Silly boy!

ROSSO. There, go back to your distillations, and I'll see if I can find the master; for now he's up, and now he's down, now he's in, now he's out; what a windmill love makes of a man!

ALV. You've got the idea.

[1] *becco geloso.*
[2] *Se n'è accorto?*

(*Alvigia goes out and Parabolano comes in.*)

Rosso. Here he is himself. Greetings.

Par. What's the news?

Rosso. Good news; at a quarter after six she'll be waiting for you in the house of the blessed Lady, Madonna Alvigia.

Par. I congratulate you, her, and my benign fortune. Listen, One, two, three, four.

Rosso. Ha, ha, ha! The bells ring and you think they're clocks.

Par. I can't possibly live so long.

Rosso. Nor I fast so long.

Par. Oh what a passion!

Rosso. Don't you think I want a little supper, not being made of lead.

Par. That's for you to say. As for me, I feed on my memories.

Rosso. I'd feed on them too, if they were good to eat, those memories of yours. Let's go in.

Par. I'm coming.

(*End of Act Fourth*)

ACT FIFTH

(*Valerio comes in.*)

VAL. I've just been relieved of a great doubt. I say this because I used to believe that faces and tongues corresponded to hearts and minds, and this belief came from the knowledge I had of my own ability and the consciousness that I had made an amiable use of my ability towards all; and for the one reason and the other, I had thought that I was not merely loved but adored, and now I can say: Oh, my credulity, how you have deceived me! Oh, the perverse, ungrateful, and envious nature of the Court! Is there any malevolence in the world, is there any deceit in the world, and is there any cruelty in the world which are not to be found in it? As soon as my Lord changed his attitude toward me, the love, the faith, the countenances and the minds of all his household dropped that mask which for so long a time had concealed from me the truth, and now, every vile servant abhors me, as if I were a venomous serpent, and as it used to seem the very walls bowed to me, so now it seems they flee me. And those who used to praise me to the skies now condemn me to the abyss. Every one is pushing to get into the master's presence, and they show in their bearing the same humanity that is to be seen in those who demand without asking and speak without opening their mouths; and everyone with his gestures and his words forces himself to show a disdain for my present condition. One, fearing I may return to my former state, merely shrugs his shoulders and is careful not to offend or defend me; another, certain that his desires have

been fulfilled, transfixes me without any respect whatever. And so it is, envy, which is the mother and daughter of the Court, has already begun to make them strive together, and he who is nearest in rank to the one who has fallen is assailed by whoever is a rung lower on the ladder of hope.[1] In short, each one, seeking elevation through my fall, wounds me and exalts himself. And in such a plight, it seems to me, I am like a river with which every little stream vies when, swollen by rains, it overflows and makes a bed of the surrounding land. But I trust to my innocence to protect me from their haughty malice just as the rivulets which trust to the sun to destroy the snow and ice of the mountains are swallowed up by the plains which they have so impetuously presumed to dominate. And since patience disarms envy, I shall strive with patience to cut the cords with which my fate, as I may say, has bound me; for every benefit and every injury is to be placed to the account of fate. And now, I want to go home, for, to live at Court, it is to be presupposed that one is deaf, dumb, and blind.

(*He goes out. Togna comes in.*)

TOGNA. I want to see if that old drunkard has come back yet. I hope he falls and breaks a leg. It's too bad the devil hasn't sense enough to take him when he's snoring away in the tavern. Do I see him coming there? I hope who ever gave me such a husband dies a terrible death. I ought to give him something, and I wouldn't be the first wife who did such a thing as that. There's the big pig now. He looks fresh enough. He's got three sheets in the wind already.[2]

(*Arcolano comes in, pretending to be drunk.*)

ARC. W-where is the d-door, h-house, the w-windows are d-dancing, I'll f-fall in the r-river.

[1] See *Letters*, CIX.
[2] *cammina a onde.*

TOGNA. I wish to God you would! Who bought you the wine you've been drinking?

ARC. Wine your r-rump. Ha, ha, ha! B-bring me the d-dog that I w-wanted to get . . .

TOGNA. You get what you deserve. I don't know why I don't choke you.

ARC. Oh, oh, but I'm h-hot!

(*They go out. Parabolano and Rosso come in.*)

PAR. Waiting is as hard as death.

ROSSO. Waiting for dinner?

PAR. I was speaking of love.

ROSSO. Oh, I thought you were speaking of dinner, your Lordship, pardon me.

PAR. There's nothing to pardon. Listen: one, two, three.

ROSSO. You're crazy; the cook bangs the frying-pan, and you think it is a clock. The devil take all women, assassins that they are.

PAR. Let's go into the house. I thought it was time. That's why I came out.

ROSSO. These old fellows with bats in their belfry will drive me crazy yet. (*They go out.*)

(*Togna comes in, in her husband's clothes*).

TOGNA. Oh God, why wasn't I born a man? How do I look in these clothes? It is a great misfortune to be born a woman, and after all, what are we women good for? To cook, to sew, and to stay locked up in the house all year, and for what? To be beaten and insulted every day, and by whom? By a big drunkard and a lazy dolt like this old sport of mine. Oh poor we, what a lot is ours! If your man is a gambler and loses, it is you who are out of luck; if he has no money, it falls on you; if wine takes him off his pegs, it is you who bear the blame; and they are so jealous they think every fly is making or talking love. And if it wasn't that we have brains enough to make sport of them, we might as well go hang ourselves. It is a great sin that the preacher

doesn't put in a word for us with the Lord, for it is not right that one like me should go to hell simply for having a husband like the one God has given me. And if the confessor gives me a penance for what I am doing, I hope I die if I don't say to him, for once: "Would you give a penance to a poor unfortunate woman who has for a husband a brute, a gambler, a tavern-hound, a jealous fool and a dog of a gardener?" But Alvigia must be expecting me. I must go find her. What man is that I see there?

(She goes out. Andrea comes in.)

And. Old master dung-hill has fallen on Camilla's back like a kite on a full meal, and he tells her his love with innumerable oaths and kisses her hand like a passionate Don Sancio. He slashes away in the Neapolitan manner, sighs in the Spanish manner, laughs in the manner of a Sanese, and prays in the manner of a Courtier; and he wants to copulate in all the fashions there are in the world, till the Signora nearly bursts with laughter. But here's Zoppino. You disappeared before, like meat in the servants' hall.

(Zoppino comes in.)

Zopp. I left because the silliness of your Sanese was getting on my nerves.

And. By God, but you speak the truth; it is beginning to bore me too.

Zopp. You know what I'm afraid will happen?

And. What?

Zopp. I'm afraid by mingling with him we shall become as foolish as he is. But I've an idea. Let's change cloaks and barrettas and, with brave words, assault the Signora's house and make him jump out of the window. The window is so low he can't hurt himself.

And. That's a good idea. Here, take mine, and give me yours.

Zopp. Give me your barretta and take mine.

And. In this disguise they will never recognize us.
Zopp. Force the door, yell, hurl defiance.
And. Ah, coward! Chippy-chaser, traitor!
Zopp. I'll have the law on you!
And. Open up! open up!
(*Maco leaps out of the window in his giubbone. Andrea and Zoppino run out.*)
Maco. I'm done for! To the street, to the street! Spaniards are after me! Where shall I go? Where shall I flee? Where shall I hide myself?
(*He goes out. Parabolano and Rosso come running in.*)
Par. What's the matter, Rosso? What's all the uproar?
Rosso. I ask your Lordship.
Par. I don't see anyone.
Rosso. Let us go back, it was just some lazy jokers, beating their swords against the wall.
Par. The beasts.
(*They go out. Arcolano comes in, dressed in his wife's clothes.*)
Arc. The whore, the cow, the sow! I ought to give her to the Friars, I ought. Oh, oh, oh! Go pass blood. I wonder to what hole she's gone now? A wife knows them all! I barely closed my eyes when she put on my clothes and ran out, leaving her own on the bed-chest, and, not to run out naked, I had to put on hers to follow her. I must think where I can find her, and when I've found her, I'll eat her alive! I must go here and go there, but it would be better for me to go to the *ponte* and wait till she passes. So you would, would you? Ribald traitress!

(*He goes out. Parabolano and Rosso come in.*)

Par. How many was that?
Rosso. I don't know because I didn't count.
Par. I heard it strike one, two, three, four, five, six, seven.
Rosso. You'll soon be playing trumps with Livia.[1]

[1]*far gemini dei tarocchi con.*

PAR. You make me laugh.

ROSSO. Look, there's someone with a lantern in her hand. It is Alvigia. I know her by her walk. Am I right?

(*Alvigia comes in.*)

ALV. By my grace and yours, your friend is in my house, and she's like a dove who fears the falcon. Your Lordship will not forget about not taking her into the light; and since, for appearance's sake, she has come dressed as a man, I doubt not there will be no scandal.

PAR. How, a scandal? I would sooner open all my veins than displease her.

ALV. So say all of you Lords, and then you go and do good women in.

PAR. I don't understand.

ALV. Rosso understands me right enough.

ROSSO. No, I don't, by God.

PAR. What scandal can come from her being dressed as a man?

ALV. The devil is subtle, and the *gran Maestri* are always wide-awake.

ROSSO. I get you now. Master, she's afraid of what will be said afterwards.

PAR. Hell's fire,[1] and I hope it burns anyone who would tell on a lady.

ROSSO. Don't swear such an oath as that.

PAR. Why?

ROSSO. Because it would empty the world of Signori and of great men.

PAR. Let us go.

ALV. I trust to your Lordship; wait here till I come back to you. (*She goes out.*)

ROSSO. Your face looks altogether different.

PAR. Mine?

ROSSO. Yours.

PAR. Overcome by sovereign love . . .

[1] *Fuoco venga dal cielo.*

Rosso. What's that?

Par. I am unable to say a word.

Rosso. It's a silly fellow that's afraid to speak a word to a lady. Your Lorship has a face whiter than the faces of those whom, at Venice, those Excellent doctors, Carlo da Fano, Polo Romano, and Dio Nisio Capucci of the Città di Castello, bring to life from the dead.

Par. He who loves, fears.

Rosso. He who loves, has a good time, as you will be having very soon.

Par. O most blessed night, dearer to me than all the happy days of those who rejoice in fortune's favor. I would not change place with those souls who, in the Heavens above, are happy in contemplating the aspect of the wonderful God. O serene forehead, O sacred breast, O golden hair, O precious hands, the treasury of my singular Phoenix! Can it be true, then, that I am worthy of admiring you, of kissing you and of touching you? O sweet mouth, adorned with pearls without flaw, amid which breathes the most nectarous odor. Can it be you will consent that I, who am all fire, should moisten my dry lips in the celestial ambrosia which you so sweetly distill? O divine eyes, which lend light to the Sun, which comes to nest in you when the day is done, will you not illuminate with your benign rays my bedroom and put to flight those inimical shadows which contend to keep from me the sight of that angel on whom my life depends?

Rosso. Your Lordship has made a great proem.

Par. Thus do I bind great things in a little bundle.[1]

(*Alvigia comes in.*)

Alv. Be quiet, for the love of God. Don't make a sound.

Rosso. Tell me, Alvigia . . .

Alv. Quiet, the neighbors, the neighbors will hear; see that

[1]The line is lifted from Petrarch [*Trionfo della fama*, Cap. II.]: *Molte gran cose in picciol fascio stringo.*

you don't make any noise. *Oimè*, what a risk to run.

Rosso. Don't be afraid.

Alv. Quiet, quiet. Give me your hand, my Lord.

Par. Oh, how happy I am!

Alv. Easy, my Lord.

Rosso. I had forgot one thing . . .

Alv. You want to ruin us. They'll hear us. Damn this squeaking door.

(*Alvigia and Parabolano go out.*)

Rosso. If you're lucky, you'll eat her; if you're unlucky, you'll find yourself eating cow's meat of the kind the poor servants do in their hall. There's only one thing I'm sorry for, and that is that Alvigia hasn't in the house Sgozza, Roina, Squartapoggio, or some other pimp who would cut his throat, draw and quarter him. (*Alvigia comes back*). What are you laughing at? Has he come to the point with the Signora Fornaia?

Alv. He is with her and neighing like a stallion that sees the mare. He sighs, he spits, he slashes, and he promises to make her a Popess.

Rosso. That comes from his Neapolitan nature, if he slashes.

Alv. Is that simpleton a Neapolitan?

Rosso. Didn't you know it?

Alv. No.

Rosso. He's a relative of Giovanni Agnese.

Alv. Of that bird who goes around looking in key-holes?

Rosso. Of that swindler, that knave and that traitor, whose least vice is to be an infamous fisherman.

Alv. What a rascal and what a glutton! But let's not talk of him; it's a shame to mention such a dolt, trickster and pimp, saving my own honor. But what are you thinking of?

Rosso. I'm thinking, we're treating the master like a *gran maestro*.

Alv. How's that?

Rosso. By making him acquainted with Togna.

Alv. Ha, ha, ha!

Rosso. And after this, I think maybe I'll get out of the servants' hall; it makes me tremble even to think of it; I have more fear of the servants' hall than a thousand masters.

Alv. And if the thing is discovered, won't you be afraid?

Rosso. Why should I be afraid? I'll take to my legs.

Alv. Tell me, is the servants' hall such a terrible thing that it makes even a Rosso tremble?

Rosso. It is so terrible that it would frighten Morgante and Margutte, not to speak of that Catellaccio, whose least accomplishment was to eat a wether, two pairs of capons, and a hundred eggs at a meal.

Alv. He's a man after my own heart, your Messer Catellaccio.

Rosso. Alvigia, while that old vulture is in there, getting his fill of that carrion-hag, I want to say a couple of words to you about that gentle institution, the servants' hall.[1]

Alv. Do, please.

Rosso. If evil fortune forces you to go into the servants' hall, you will find, as soon as you enter, a place that reminds you of a dark, dank tomb, so horrible that sepulchres are a hundred times more inviting. And if you have ever seen the prison of the Corte Savello, when it is full of prisoners, you have seen the servants' hall full of servants at eating-time. Yes, the servants' hall is like a prison, but prisons are more comfortable, for in winter the prisoners are as warm as in summer, while the servants' halls in summer are boiling and in winter are so cold that your words freeze in your mouth; and the smell of the prison is less displeasing than the stink of the servants' hall, for the former comes from the prisoners and the latter from dying men.

[1]We must remember Aretino himself, when he first came to Rome, had been a servant, of one grade or another, in the house of Agostino Chigi and, perhaps, in other houses.

Alv. You have reason to fear it.

Rosso. But listen. They eat off a table-cloth of more colors than a painter's apron, and if it were not improper, I should say of more colors than those pieces of cloth which women soil when they are sick.

Alv. *Ehu, ehu, ohe, ohe!*

Rosso. It makes you vomit to think of it. And do you know where they wash that tablecloth at the end of a meal?

Alv. Where?

Rosso. In the pig's grease of the candles which were burned the night before, although very often we eat without any light, and that is fortunate, for in the dark our stomachs do not turn at sight of the rascally repasts they bring us, which, starving as we are, satisfy us and, satisfying us, drives us to despair.

Alv. May God damn the one that's to blame for that.

Rosso. Neither God nor the devil could do worse. We may never keep Easter nor Carnival, but all the year around we keep the feast of the mother of St. Luke.

Alv. Do you eat the flesh of Saints?

Rosso. And of the Crucified also; although that is not why I am telling you this. I am telling you because St. Luke is pictured as an ox, and the mother of an ox?

Alv. As a cow. Ha, ha!

Rosso. And then come the fruits. When the melons, artichokes, figs, grapes and plums are rotten enough to be thrown away, they give them to us. Sometimes, it is true, in place of the fruits, they give us four slices of buffalo cheese, so dry and hard it gives us a colic that would kill a Marforio; and if anyone, with a thousand supplications, begs the cook for a platter of thin soup, they give him a plate of lye.

Alv. Don't they give you good soup?

Rosso. Like that the Friars have. Do you know why so many Friars leave their orders? It is for no other reason than on account of the soup.

ALV. You mean to say . . . yes, yes, I understand.

ROSSO. I mean to say, they kill the soup, as the Court kills the faith of those who serve it. But who could tell you all the treasons of the servants' hall, when Lent comes with its fast days? And they do this from their own stinginess and not for the good of our souls.

ALV. Why speak of the soul?

ROSSO. Lent comes, and look you, for dinner you have two anchovies to go around as an antipasto; they then bring on a few Sardinian herbs, burned and not cooked, accompanied by a certain bean soup, without salt and without oil, which is enough to make anyone curse heaven. Then, in the evening, we make a supper on ten nettle leaves as a salad, a small loaf of bread, and God help you.

ALV. What a shame!

ROSSO. All this would be a light matter, if they only showed us a little mercy in the dog-days. Then, in addition to the horrible perfume which comes from the bone-piles, covered with filth that is never swept up and with enough flies to fill a city, you are given to drink wine diluted with tepid water, which, before you taste it, has stood four hours to settle in a wooden vase; and all drink out of a single pewter cup which all the water in the Tiber would not be able to wash clean; and while they are eating, it is a fine sight to see this one wiping his hands on his stockings, this one on his cloak, another on his jerkin and another against the wall.[1]

ALV. How terrible! And is this true of all of them?

ROSSO. Of all of them. And for a greater torment, we have to gulp it down posthaste in the manner of kites.

ALV. Who keeps you from eating at your leisure?

ROSSO. That respectable man, the reverend steward, with the music of his baton. When he has sounded twice a *laetamus genua*, we have to rise. And it's a shame! We

[1] An example of Aretino's "unpleasant" realism.

are not only not allowed to have our fill of food, we cannot even have our fill of words.

ALV. The steward is a knave!

ROSSO. Once in a lifetime they give you a banquet. If you could see that procession of heads, feet, necks, carcasses, bones and skeletons, you would think you were watching that procession which you see at San Marco on Master Pasquin's day. Just as, on that day, parsons, archpriests, canons and similar gentry carry in their hands the relics of martyrs and confessors, so these doorkeepers, stewards, spies and other leprous and lousy officials come bearing a capon and partridges, and, having first set aside a portion for themselves and their whores, they toss the rest to us.

ALV. What a life!

ROSSO. Alvigia, I saw one yesterday who, upon hearing the dinner bell, began weeping as one would for the death of his father. When I asked him why he was weeping, he replied: "I am weeping because that bell is calling us to eat the bread of sorrow, to drink our own blood, and to feed on the flesh of our own life, cooked in our own sweat." And he was a Prelate who told me that, who had that evening four nuts to break his fast, while the chamberlain had three, a shield-bearer two and myself one.

ALV. Do the Prelates eat in the servants' hall?

ROSSO. It is all the same; and that is the reason why everyone does not come to Rome. And yet, they are rich enough.

ALV. Blessed be the Spaniards.[1]

ROSSO. Yes, if they had punished the wicked and not the good. It is the truth, as that Prelate I told you of, he of the four nuts, swore to me, they are richer than ever; and he says that when they are reproved for letting

[1]Who sacked Rome.

their household die of hunger, they blame it on the Sack and not on their own poltroonery.

ALV. I can see that you know them all. But what's this I hear? A racket in the house? We're undone, ruined, keep still . . . *Oimè!* That's the Signor raising his voice. We shall be discovered. I deserve all that's coming to me for running such a risk on account of you.

ROSSO. Be quiet. I want to hear what they're saying.

ALV. Put your ear to the door.

ROSSO. That's a good idea.

ALV. What are they saying?

ROSSO. Cow, she-pig, poltroon, traitor, pimp, thief.

ALV. Who is that meant for?

ROSSO. Cow, she-pig, that's for Togna. Poltroon, traitor, that means Rosso. And pimp, thief, that's Alvigia.

ALV. Damn the day I met you.

ROSSO. He's saying he's going to break her in two, burn you alive, and hang me. *A rivederci.* (*He runs out.*)

ALV. So, you run away, you big glutton! I'm in a pretty pickle. I make a vow that if I get out of this I'll fast all the Fridays in March, I'll go to all the six churches ten times every month, I'll go barefoot; I promise to make *acqua cotta* for the incurables; I'll make clysters for the sick of Santo Joanni for a year. I'll wait on the religious; I'll go wash clothes at the hospital eight days for nothing. And if I have deceived the saints in my other vows, I won't in this. Blessed Angelo Raffaello, I beg you by your wings to aid me; Messer San Tubia, I beg you by your fish, keep me out of hell-fire; Messer San Giuliano, save me by your rosary which I'm going home now to say.

(*She runs out. Parabolano comes in.*)

PAR. I have been the victim of a groom and an old procuress, and I've got what I deserve. Now I know how silly it is for one like me, on account of what he is, to believe

that he can have anything he wants, and, blinded by delusions of his own grandeur, to refuse to listen to good advice or the truth. Thinking only of our own lascivious desires, we hate and drive away from us those who propose what is fitting to our station. To this, my Valerio can bear witness. I am a fool, and I can hear even now the story of my stupidity being shouted over Rome. There's Valerio now. He looks sad.

(*Enter Valerio.*)

VAL. *Signor mio*, since the envy of my enemies has conquered your kindness, I, with your permission, will go away some place where you shall never hear of me again.

PAR. Do not weep, brother. Love, my own rash will and simple nature, are the things which have offended you. I will tell you one of the most novel jokes that was ever heard of in a thousand years, and one that ought to be enough for a hundred comedies. You know how I used to laugh at Messer Filippo Adimari, who, when he was in Leo's house, was led to believe that those who were working on the foundations of his *casa* at Trastevere had found a number of bronze statues; whereupon he, alone, on foot and in his cassock, ran to have a look at them. He found himself in the same plight in which I am, thanks to the joke Rosso has played on me.

VAL. Rosso, eh? He never deceived me.

PAR. You know, too, the laugh I had over the wax figure which Messer Marco Bracci found under his pillow, on account of which he caused Signora Marticca, who happened to be sleeping with him that night, to be arrested, being convinced that it was a piece of witchcraft on her part.

VAL. Ha, ha, ha!

PAR. What good fun I used to have at the expense of Messer

Francesco Tornabuoni for taking twelve syrups and a medicine, though not sick at all, being certain he had the syphilis.

VAL. I know all those things.

PAR. And now, what do you advise me to do in such a case?

VAL. I should snap my fingers at all gossip, and I myself should tell the joke just as it is; for that way there will be less of a laugh, and it will not get about so much.

PAR. You speak like a wise man. Wait here till I have a word with her whom I took for a Roman gentlewoman.

(*Parabolano goes out.*)

VAL. It is a thing well-known to everybody that he alone is master of his Lord who holds the keys to his pleasures and his appetities; and if anyone doubts this, he needs but look at what Rosso has done to me. All Rosso knows is how to promise to bring, not how to bring ladies to his Lordship. The short of the matter is, *gran maestri* have more esteem for those who give them pleasure than they have for all the glory in the world; and I believe that anyone who had attained such a rank would do the same.

(*Enter Parabolano with Alvigia and Togna.*)

PAR. So you thought I wouldn't find you?

ALV. Mercy and not justice.

PAR. What the devil do you mean, I told Rosso in his sleep?

ALV. In your sleep you let Rosso know that you were in love with Livia.

PAR. Ha, ha, ha!

ALV. From being too compassionate I've put my foot in it.

PAR. Too compassionate, eh?

ALV. *Signor, si.* When Rosso swore that you were on the point of dying for Livia, not to see so fine a youth and so fine a Signor perish, I did what I did.

PAR. I am greatly obliged to you. Ha, ha, ha! And now tell me something. Come here, madonna Filatoia. But I did not notice you were dressed like a baker.

TOGNA. Signor, this old sorceress has dragged me into her house by the hair of the head, through necromancy.

ALV. That's a lie, you old gossip, you pile of mule dung!

TOGNA. It's not!

ALV. It is!

PAR. Peace, and leave the screaming to me, as well as the laughing.

VAL. On all occasions I have known you for a wise man, and now on this one, I regard you as most wise; I understand the whole thing now, and it is truly to laugh. But who is this with the beard, dressed like a woman?

(*Arcolano enters.*)

ARC. I've got you! I've found you! And you, old traitress, are you here? I'll kill you both! Don't hold me, my good fellow.

PAR. Stand back.

ARC. Let me punish my wife and this old she-ruffian.

VAL. Hold your temper. Ha, ha, ha!

ARC. You would, would you, you whore! You would, would you, you ruffian!

VAL. Ha, ha, ha!

TOGNA. You lie, you big loafer.

ALV. Sire Arcolano, you speak the truth.

PAR. Is this your wife?

ARC. Yes, sir.

PAR. She looks to me like your husband. Ha, ha, ha! (*Arcolano draws a dagger.*) Here, put up that dagger! It would be a sin to turn so fine a comedy into a tragedy.

(*Messer Maco comes in. Arcolano, Togna and Alvigia go out.*)

MACO. The Spaniards! The Spaniards!

PAR. Here's Messer Maco.

MACO. The Spaniards have cut me to pieces.

PAR. What business have you with the Spaniards?

MACO. Let me get my breath. I—I—I—

PAR. Well?

MACO. W—went——

VAL. Where?

MACO. W-went, had gone, had—went to the—to the Signora Ca—Camilla—I don't seem to be able to get myself together. Wait a minute, if you want to hear the story. Maestro Andrea had made me a Courtier with the moulds, and the devil ruined me; then Maestro Andrea repaired, ruined, and repaired me again, till I was made over into the fine gallant you see. I went to the house of Signora Camilla, because I had a right to go there, I had a right, because I am a Courtier, I am. And the Spaniards made me jump out of a window, I think it was—high, very high.

PAR. You can't teach an old dog new tricks; but surely, God must help children and madmen.

MACO. What do you mean?

PAR. The way he helped you, who were first ruined and then repaired. The trouble is, most of us come to Rome repaired and leave it undone, without finding anyone who will take the trouble to make us over or to keep us from ruin in the end. There is no respect for nobility, good sense or any virtue whatsoever.

(*Andrea comes in, bearing Maco's coat and barretta.*)

MACO. There's one of those Spaniards now! Aha, poltroon! Give me my cloak! Don't hold me!

PAR. Ha, ha, ha! Why, that's your own Maestro Andrea!

AND. Don't be angry, Messer Maco.

MACO. Spanish knave!

AND. I am Maestro Andrea, and I've just killed the one who took your cloak and baretta and have brought them back to you.

MACO. What do you mean, Maestro Andrea? You are the Spaniard. I'll have your life!

VAL. Ha, ha, ha! Keep your head; put your wrath back in the scabbard.

(*Alvigia, the Fisherman and the Jew come in*).

FISH. So you thought you'd get away from me, you cheat? You thought you'd be safe at night? You thought you could treat a Florentine like this and get out of it clean?

ROSSO. You wrong me; you've made a mistake.

FISH. I've got you. Where are my lampreys, you traitorous glutton?

VAL. Our Rosso . . . (*The Fisherman leaps at Rosso.*)

PAR. Take him away, take him away. Don't kill our comedy.

FISH. Let me break that thief's neck who got ten lampreys from me on pretence of being the Pope's steward; and on account of him, the *Maestro di Casa* as I thought, I've had to stand at the *Colonna* as one bewitched.

PAR. Ha, ha, ha! Gallant Rosso.

ROSSO. (*Dropping on his knees.*) *Signor mio*, pardon, and don't punish me. I am your Lordship's slave and Maestro Valerio's, and you know well enough this good fellow has made a mistake.

PAR. Get up, ha, ha, ha!

ROSSO. Alvigia here has your diamond and your necklace.

VAL. Ha, ha, ha! You thought . . .

ALV. I'll give them back to you. Rosso, the big glutton, has kept me on the jump.[1]

ROSSO. You've done the same to Rosso, you old ribald, and I'm going to see that you are punished. (*He makes for her.*)

PAR. Stand back, I tell you. Ha, ha, ha! We'll be lucky if this doesn't end in a tragedy yet.

JEW. I want my doublet. This is the way they deceive poor Hebrews. *Oimè*, my arms! The lash is the pay I get. O swinish Rome, what fine manners you have! But the devil would not be willing for the Messiah to come, if things were otherwise.

PAR. Be quiet, Isaac or Jacob, or whatever your name is. It's pay enough for you to let you live, since you are one of those who crucified Christ.

[1] *mi ha messo ne' salti.*

JEW. Patience!

(*Maco, Andrea, Arcolano and Togna come in*).

PAR. Be quiet, all of you. I will speak first with you, Messer Maco.

MACO. That's right, because I am a Courtier, I am.

PAR. Ha, ha, ha! You will make peace here with Maestro Andrea, or the Spaniard, as you believe him to be. If you look upon him as a maestro, make peace with him for having undone and then remade you; and moreover, reflect that he would have done the same to his own father, if his father had wanted to be made a courtier in the way he made one out of you. And if you look upon him as a Spaniard, make peace with him, anyway; and the reason for that I will tell you another time.

MACO. I'll make peace with him.

PAR. Give him his cloak and his barretta, Maestro Andrea.

AND. Your Lordship's servant.

MACO. That's a good fellow.

PAR. You, baker, take back your wife for better or for worse; for the wives of today are looked upon as more chaste when they are whores. And he who thinks he has a better one has a worse.

ARC. I will do what your Lordship advises.

VAL. And you are wise.

PAR. I pardon you, Alvigia, because it was wrong to believe you in the first place and because you have only followed your profession.

ALV. God reward you.

VAL. Ha, ha, ha!

PAR. I will also pardon you, Rosso, because you are a Greek, and have only acted in the manner of a Greek, with the astuteness of a Greek. And you, Valerio, be content to reconcile yourself with Rosso, since I have forgiven him, and since he has had the genius to lead me around by the nose in the manner I've told you.

VAL. I am wholly at your bidding.

Rosso. You know, Messer Valerio, that Rosso would let himself be drawn and quartered for you.

Val. Ha, ha, ha!

Fish. And am I to go without pay for my lampreys?

Par. You, Fisherman, are to pardon Rosso, since there is so little of the Florentine in you that you let yourself traffic with him as you have said. And as to this Jewish beast, let Valerio see that he is satisfied; let his jerkin be given back or paid for.

Fish. *Gran mercè* to your Lordship.

Jew. Your Lordship's servant.

Fish. I'll pardon Rosso, but not those traitorous priests who flayed me.

Par. Go to with your priests, who dressed your breeches for you at the *Colonna*. And now you, Valerio, making every excuse for me, forgive me for what I did to you in the insanity of love; and remember, moreover, it is not a little thing for one of my rank to seek forgiveness from an inferior. Now, good Baker, he who has horns under his feet and does not put them on his head is a beast.[1]

Arc. The devil he is.

Par. Certainly, for horns are very ancient and come from above, and it is my opinion that God put them on Moses with his own hand, and the same with the moon; and since both Moses and the moon have horns, they are not what they appear to you to be; the Moon with its horns adorns the heavens and Moses the Old Testament.

Arc. By that, you give me to understand my disease is health.

Par. Why not? All good things have horns. Oxen, snails, and what do you think of the winged-horns? Their horns are worth a world and are good against poison.

[1]Follows a play on the cuckold idea.

And what do you think the horn of a man is worth, when that of an animal is so valuable and has such virtues? The horns of men are good against poverty, etc. And many gentlemen bear them as arms.

ARC. Be that as it may; for, as you see, I've given mine to one who would never believe it; it is enough that he is what you say he is.

PAR. And now, Monna Loathe-Little, come kiss your husband.

ARC. Yes, come give me a kiss.

TOG. Go 'way from me, old soak; don't touch me!

ARC. Ah, cruel woman, why have you betrayed me?

TOG. What would you have me do when a gentleman makes advances? Throw him to the pigs?

VAL. She's right, Ha, ha, ha!

ALV. Signor, since you are such a gentle creature, I'll give you what Livia didn't. For she, if you take away what little face she has,[1] is not very chipper.

PAR. You'll give me nothing more, by God. Ha, ha, ha! She's of a mind to do me again! Valerio, let's all go into the house. I want all these comedians to dine with me, and I want you to hear the whole story. We will laugh together all night, and in every way it is Carnival time.

VAL. Here is the house. Maestro Andrea, bring up the rear with this rabble. Maestro Maco, your Lordship should enter first.

MACO. *Gran mercè.* But his Lordship, the Signor Rapolano should enter first.

PAR. Let us go. Let us go and dine and laugh till morning.

(*They go out, with the exception of Rosso, who remains behind.*)

ROSSO. And now, folks, if you blame the length of our discourse, know that we merely have followed the fashion in use at Court. Knowing that at Rome all things run

[1] *quel suo poco di viso:* cf. Boccaccio [*Dec.* VIII., 7]: *Cotesto tuo pochetto di viso.*

to length, to have done otherwise would have been to court ruin. And so, we hope you will praise our long chitter-chatter, for it could not all be told *in saecula saeculorum.*

The End